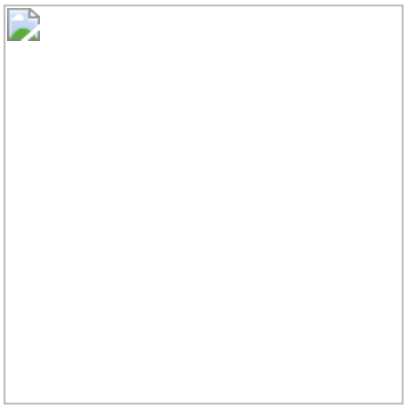
Introduction



Dungeons & Dragons is a cooperative game in which players create exciting fantasy stories guided by a Dungeon Master, or DM. Imagination and chance determine the fate of the players' characters.

An Ongoing Game. Each time you gather to play D&D, you're playing a single game session. These sessions connect to form adventures like the ones in this product. The next time you play, the story picks up where you left off.

Choose Your Role

To play D&D with *Stranger Things: Welcome to the Hellfire Club*, you need two to five people to play as characters and one person to be the Dungeon Master.

Playing a Character

If you want to be one of the protagonists in your group's adventures, consider playing a character. Your character is your alter ego in the fantasy world of the game. Here's what these players do.

Choose a Character

Select from the following five characters from the world of *Stranger Things*:

- **Lady Applejack**. Played by Erica Sinclair, Lady Applejack is a Chaotic Good, Elf Rogue who will sneak behind any monster, stab them in the back with her kukri, and smile as she watches them die a slow, agonizing death.
- **Nog the Dwarf**. Dustin Henderson's sturdy Cleric, Nog, has gotten his companions out of a bind more times than he can count. Nog is a devotee of Heironeous, a god of chivalry, justice, and war.
- **Sundar the Bold**. A gallant and unyielding warrior, Sundar the Bold bravely defends his companions—just like this Fighter's player, Lucas Sinclair.
- **Tayr the Paladin**. When Mike Wheeler isn't behind the DM screen in his parents' basement, he dusts off his trusty Paladin, Tayr. The heart of the party, Tayr unites his companions and leads the charge in their fight against evil.
- **Will the Wise**. Will Byer's Wizard is a mainstay of the party and is always up for another adventure. When Will the Wise casts a spell, his magic sometimes manifests in unexpected colors.

Team Up

Your character joins the other players' characters to form an adventuring party, often referred to as "the party." These adventurers are allies who face challenges and fantastical situations together. Each character has distinctive capabilities that complement those of the other characters.

Venture Forth

Your character's group explores locations and events presented by the DM. You can respond to them however you can imagine, guided by the rules in the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules). Although the DM controls all the monsters you encounter, the DM isn't your adversary. The DM guides your party's journey as your characters become more powerful.

Being the Dungeon Master

If you want to be the mastermind of the game, consider being the DM. Here's what DMs do:

- **Run the Adventure.** You run one or more of the adventures.
- **Guide the Story.** You narrate much of the action during play, describing locations and creatures that the adventurers face. The players decide what their characters do as they navigate hazards and choose what to explore. Then you use a combination of imagination and the game's rules to determine the results of the adventurers' decisions.
- **Adjudicate the Rules.** You oversee how the group uses the game's rules, making sure the rules serve the group's fun. You'll want to read the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules), and you'll find the *rules glossary* essential.

> *Don't worry, Henderson. I'm not going to leave you high and dry. Papa Bear is here. I've left notes like this throughout the adventures to give you a peek behind the scenes and help you run these adventures, but you gotta make 'em your own. You can do this. I believe in you.*

Swapping Roles

Playing a character and being the Dungeon Master aren't permanent roles. Each adventure is a self-contained story. Whenever you begin an adventure, determine who will be the DM for that story.

If your group consists of five or fewer players, the previous DM can either choose from the remaining characters or play as the new DM's old character. For groups of six, the previous DM always inherits the available character. Either way, ensure that the character's level is appropriate for the upcoming adventure. The adventures span levels 1–3.

Getting Started

Once you've chosen the DM, follow the instructions below to begin play.

If You're Playing a Character

Follow these steps to prepare your character:

- **Choose a Character**. Pick one of the five level 1 Characters from *appendix D*.
- **Review Your Character**. Take a moment to look over your Character Sheet. When you're ready, introduce your character to the other players.

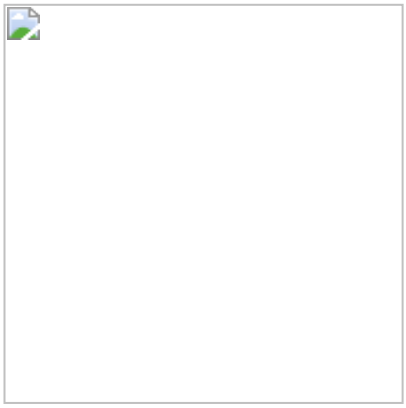
If You're the Dungeon Master

Follow these steps if you're the DM:

- **Review the *D&D Beyond Basic Rules*.** Familiarize yourself with the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules). You don't need to memorize every rule before you play, but you should understand the rhythm of play and where to find relevant information when needed.
- **Prepare the First Adventure**. "The Vanishing Gnome" is designed for level 1 characters. Read the Key Plot Points and Adventure Background sections. These sections present important context for the adventure, though the story that ultimately emerges is the one your group experiences.

Now you're ready to play D&D. Hell yeah!

Running the Adventures



The following information is key to running the adventures.

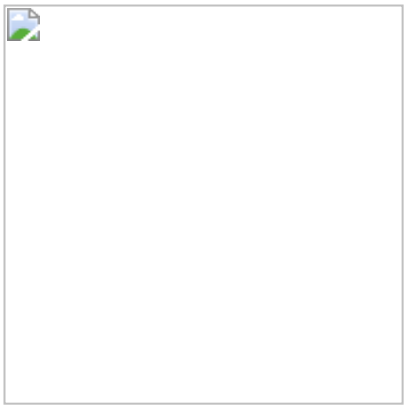
> > *Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under a specific circumstance, as described in the text.*

When a monster's name appears in Bold type, that's a visual cue to say, "Hey, DM, you should get this stat block ready. You're going to need it."

Magic items are described in Appendix A, while NPCs and Monsters are described in Appendix B.

The Vanishing Gnome

An Adventure for Level 1 Characters



This adventure is designed to fill one or two sessions of play.

If you aren't using the *Map of Greyhawkins*, it can take place in any shadowy dungeon.

Key Plot Points

This information is key to the adventure's story:

- **Plot Point 1. Flizzlebin** magically contacts the characters and challenges them to find him in the Dungeon of Shadows.
- **Plot Point 2.** The characters navigate the Dungeon of Shadows in search of Flizzlebin, who calls out to them from his *hiding place* in a twisted reflection of the dungeon connected to a mysterious realm known as the Vale of Shadows.
- **Plot Point 3.** A spawn of Demogorgon, a demon lord, has escaped the Vale of Shadows. The characters first encounter the creature in the Dungeon of Shadows, but it likely escapes.
- **Plot Point 4.** After defeating the **Demogorgon Spawn**, the characters find Flizzlebin and earn the gnome's reward.

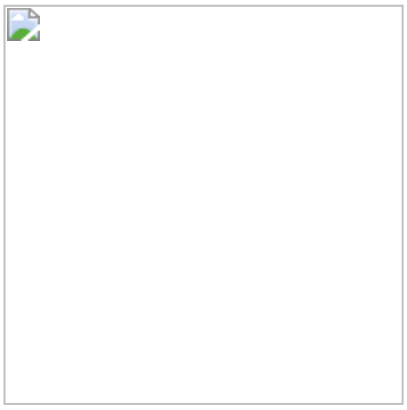
DM Preparation

Before running the adventure, prepare as follows:

- **Step 1.** Read the "Adventure Background" section.
- **Step 2.** Read the "Hide-and-Seek" section and secretly note Flizzlebin's hiding spot.

> *Don't let anyone from Hawkins PD catch you with this. Officer Callahan still thinks I stole all those lawn gnomes that went missing a few years back. Consider this booklet evidence.*

- **Step 3.** Familiarize yourself with the creatures in this adventure, which are as follows:
- 1 **Demogorgon Spawn**
- **Flizzlebin**
- 1 **Giant Spider**
- 3 **Gnoll Warriors**
- 2 **Myconid Adults**
- 3 **Goblin Warriors**
- 1 **Shadow**
- 4 **Shrieker Fungi**



- **Step 4.** Familiarize yourself with the magic items in this adventure, which are as follows:
- *Cap of Vanishing*
- *+1 Flail*
- *Flame Tongue (Greatsword)*
- 2 *Potions of Healing*
- *Wand of Secrets*

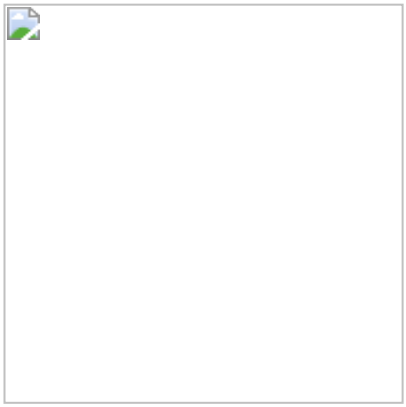
Player Assistance

You can simplify the DM's role by having the a player handle tasks typically assigned to the DM. Before play begins, see if a player would like to be the **Rules Consultant**. That player references the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules) as needed.

Adventure Background

Flizzlebin, the Vanishing Gnome, tests the mettle of would-be heroes in dangerous games of hide-and-seek in dungeons throughout the land. Over the years, the elusive gnome has magically contacted countless travelers, but few have accepted his quests—and fewer have completed them. Successful seekers have emerged from these dungeons with priceless treasures and pockets brimming with gold.

Recently, Flizzlebin vanished to the Dungeon of Shadows, a maze that borders a gloomy, monster-infested realm. There, his calls to adventurers awakened a foul creature: a spawn of the demon lord Demogorgon! As Flizzlebin eagerly broadcasts his quest, the ravenous demon stalks the dungeon, complicating the gnome's game and endangering all who seek him.



Hide-and-Seek

Flizzlebin hides in the Shadow Dungeon, a mirror of the Dungeon of Shadows. Roll on the Flizzlebin's Hiding Spot table to determine where the characters can find the gnome in the dungeon (detailed later in this adventure). Flizzlebin avoids harm in his hiding place by using his *Cap of Vanishing*.

Flizzlebin's Hiding Spot

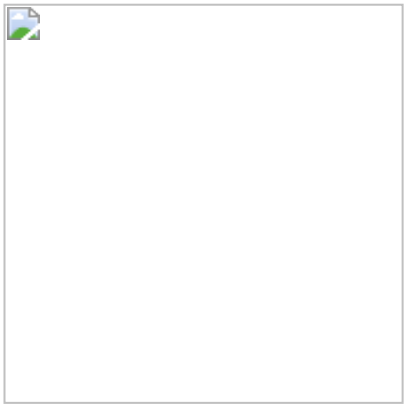
1d6	Location
1	Chamber of Bad Choices (area S1)
2	Wasteland of Filthy Vines (area S2)
3	Labyrinth of Gloom (area S3)
4	Forge of Annihilation (area S4)
5	Den of Bitsy (area S5)
6	Altar of Vecna (area S6)

Beginning the Adventure

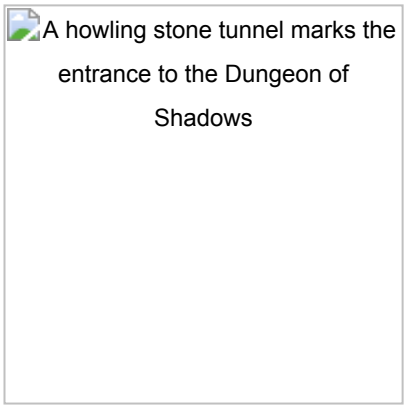
When the players are ready to begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following text:

> *You travel a well-trod road through craggy and forested country. As you pass a dense thicket, a voice calls out to you exuberantly.*
>
> *"Well-met, adventurers! 'Tis I, Flizzlebin, the Vanishing Gnome, the illustrious vagabond, the emissary of evasion! I have sequestered myself deep within the fabled Dungeon of Shadows, where I wait with a magical reward for those who prove themselves worthy. Find me, and the treasure is yours. Travel east to find the dungeon's entrance. Beware! Horrid creatures lurk within the dungeon's darkest corners... and so do I."*
>
> *The voice fades. Do you accept this quest?*

At your discretion, one or more of the characters might have heard of Flizzlebin from stories shared in taverns throughout the land. If the characters follow the gnome's instructions, they quickly arrive at the Dungeon of Shadows.



> *I've run this adventure a bunch of times. Every once in a while, I wind up with a player who has played the damn thing already, and you will, too. My advice? Never run it the same way twice. Hide Flizzlebin somewhere else. Add a couple of Vine Blights to the Shadow Dungeon. That'll keep everyone on their toes and stop blabbermouths from spoiling the fun for the newbies—and themselves.*



Dungeon of Shadows

The Dungeon of Shadows is the bridge between Greyhawkins and the Vale of Shadows, a mirror world in a realm of shadow. Bloodthirsty gnolls, giant arachnids, deadly traps, and worse terrors await visitors to the dungeon.

A warped version of the dungeon is reflected within the Vale of Shadows. Flizzlebin hides within this shadow of the dungeon above, which is accessible only through portals hidden throughout the dungeon.

Arriving at the Dungeon

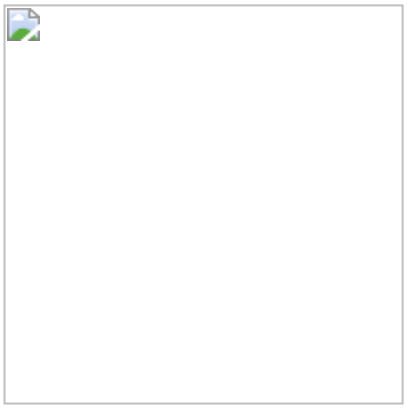
When the characters arrive at the Dungeon of Shadows, read or paraphrase the following text:

> > *You reach the entrance to the Dungeon of Shadows. Black briars grow around the entrance's mouth, which resembles a howling stone face. Past the opening, rough-hewn stairs descend into darkness.*

A character can inspect the entrance and make one of the following checks to recall lore about the dungeon and the gloomy realm it borders:

DC 12 Intelligence (History). Monsters infest this dungeon, which is suffused with shadowy magic. The dungeon was once a temple devoted to a long-forgotten god, and its reputation is as tenebrous as its entrance. Rumors speak of a second, more sinister dungeon connected to this one.

DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana). The dungeon is magically linked to the Vale of Shadows, a grim reflection of the natural world. Dreadful creatures and living shadows lurk in this dark and twisted reality; occasionally, some of these creatures escape the vale to plague the people of Greyhawkins.



The staircase descends 60 feet to *area D1*. When the characters enter the dungeon, use the Dungeon of Shadows Map to see where the characters begin in that area.

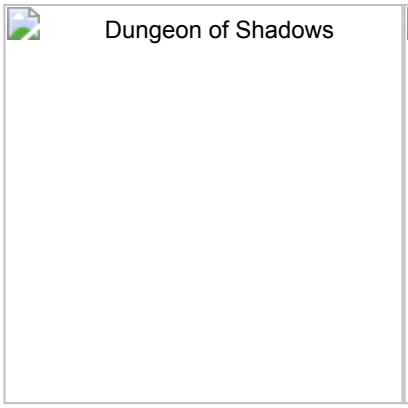
> *Flizzlebin can speak to the characters whenever you want him to. If your players are really green, he can be the voice of the DM, A.K.A. the voice of reason. He might contact the characters to drop a hint, give words of encouragement ... or warn them of CERTAIN DEATH.*

- **DM Secret!** The map for this adventure depicts the Dungeon of Shadows and its reflection in the Vale of Shadows. Keep the Vale of Shadows hidden from your players until they enter it, as detailed later in this adventure.

Dungeon Features

The dungeon has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The ceilings are 20 feet high in rooms and 10 feet high in passages.
- **Doors and Secret Doors.** Doors are unlocked and made of basalt. Secret doors manifest as spidery, elastic fissures that blend in with their surroundings. As a Search action, a character can examine a wall that contains a secret door and make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, noticing it on a successful check. A secret door opens as easily as any normal door.
- **Lighting.** Torches in iron wall sconces fill the dungeon with Bright Light.


Dungeon of Shadows

Player Version

Dungeon Locations

The following locations are keyed to the Dungeon of Shadows map. The map also indicates where each character begins in the dungeon.

D1: Chamber of Choice

> *This chamber has five stone doors, each bearing a different image and inscription.*
>
> *The torches in the chamber flicker as a faint, disembodied voice calls to you. "I'm pleased you have accepted my quest," says Flizzlebin. "I am here, but I am not here. Find me, and I shall reward you greatly. Be forewarned! You are not the only creatures who seek me in this accursed place." A monstrous roar echoes throughout the dungeon.*

Flizzlebin speaks to the characters from the Shadow Dungeon (detailed later in this adventure). The gnome magically contacts the characters as they explore the dungeon, but he doesn't say anything else to characters in this area unless you decide otherwise. Flizzlebin has discovered that his communications have attracted the spawn of Demogorgon (see *area D3*), and he doesn't want to further draw its ire.

Doors. Each of the five doors is adorned with a relief sculpture and an inscription as follows:

- Door to *D2* This door bears the image of a fuming urn. The inscription reads "Wasteland of Filth."
- Door to *D3* This door bears a relief of a ferocious, many-horned minotaur above a stone maze. The inscription reads "Labyrinth of Doom."
- Door to *D4* In this door's relief, three mischievous creatures with pointed ears and sharp teeth surround an anvil. The inscription reads, "Forge of Gibbletrax."
- Door to *D5* A spiderweb is etched into this door. The inscription reads "Den of Itsy."
- Door to *D6* Etched into this door is the image of a scowling, bipedal hyenoid warrior. The door's inscription reads "Altar of Yeenoghu."

D2: Wasteland of Filth

> *A putrid stench hangs in this room. Gnawed bones, rotten food, and ancient junk litter the stone floor.*

This room holds refuse discarded by the dungeon's denizens.

Treasure. As a Search action, a character can sift through the trash and make a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. The first character to succeed on the check unearths five ivory urns. Each urn is worth 10 GP. Four of the urns are empty, but one contains a *Potion of Healing* and a tiny pewter statue of a two-headed demon worth 90 GP. A character who inspects

the statue and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check recognizes the statue as an idol of the demon lord Demogorgon.

D3: Labyrinth of Doom

> *The torches along the walls of this maze begin to flicker, and a familiar disembodied voice says, "Many adventurers have met their demise in these corridors. Beware the fearsome minotaur!"*

A spawn of Demogorgon feeds on its latest victim

Until recently, a bloodthirsty minotaur ruled this trap-filled labyrinth. However, an even more vicious creature—the spawn of Demogorgon, a demon lord—escaped the Vale of Shadows and slew the minotaur. The spawn is devouring the minotaur's corpse in the middle of the labyrinth.

Spear Traps. The labyrinth contains three spear traps triggered by pressure plates hidden in the floor, as denoted with a "T" on the Dungeon of Shadows map. Cobwebs and dust obscure the holes that house these spears.

Each spear trap has the following rules:

- **Detect and Disarm.** As a Search action, a character can examine the walls and make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, detecting the holes on a successful check. Alternatively, a character can take the Study action to inspect the floor and make a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, detecting the pressure plate on a successful check.
- **Triggering the Trap.** When a creature moves onto a trap's pressure plate for the first time on a turn, spears thrust out from the walls. Each creature on the pressure plate must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity Saving Throw or be struck by a spear, taking 1d6 Piercing damage. The spears then retract, and the trap resets immediately.

Terror in the Maze. When the characters reach the center of the maze, read or paraphrase the following text:

> *The torches in this bloodstained corridor sputter erratically. A thin, sinewy creature with slimy, gray skin and elongated limbs crouches over a slain minotaur. The corpse squelches and snaps unsettlingly as the creature gorges on it. A small chest lies beside the mangled minotaur.*

The **Demogorgon Spawn** continues devouring the minotaur for 1 minute or until it detects the characters. The spawn is Hostile toward all other creatures.

> *This encounter is pretty tough. Go easy on them ... unless they're being ********, in which case you should give 'em hell.*

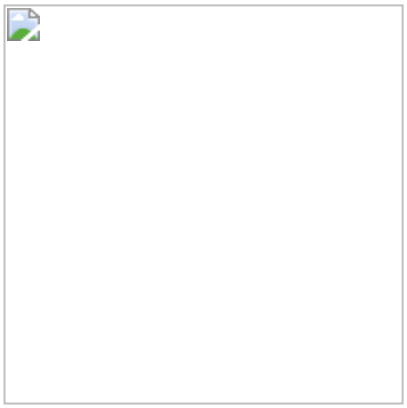
To sneak past the spawn while it feeds, a character must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check. On a failed check, or if the characters otherwise disturb the spawn, it turns toward the adventurers. When that happens, read or paraphrase the following text:

> *The creature turns toward you, and its faceless head peels back to reveal five toothed, fleshy petals around a gaping mouth. It screeches and rushes toward you.*
>
> *Roll Initiative!*

The Demogorgon spawn fights until it is reduced to 25 Hit Points or fewer, at which point it retreats through the secret door to area S3 of the Shadow Dungeon (detailed later in this adventure). If the characters manage to defeat the Demogorgon spawn here, the adventure doesn't end; the characters still must find Flizzlebin to complete his quest.

If the characters don't disturb the spawn and aren't detected, the creature finishes its meal and then relocates to area S4 in the Shadow Dungeon.

Secret Door. A secret door (see "Dungeon Features") is set into the wall in the southeast corner of the labyrinth. It leads to area S3. Characters who witnessed the Demogorgon spawn use this secret door automatically succeed on checks to find the door.



Treasure. The chest in the middle of the labyrinth contains a *Wand of Secrets* and 25 GP.

D4: Forge of Gibbletrax

> *Clanging hammers ring out in this sweltering chamber. Three goblin smiths cluster around a glowing forge in the center of the room. The goblins sing in scratchy tones as they work:*
>
> *"Deep within the Dungeon of Shadows,*
>
> *We strengthen steel to slay the beasts.*
>
> *Upside down in the Vale of Shadows,*
>
> *Brave heroes delve to keep us free."*

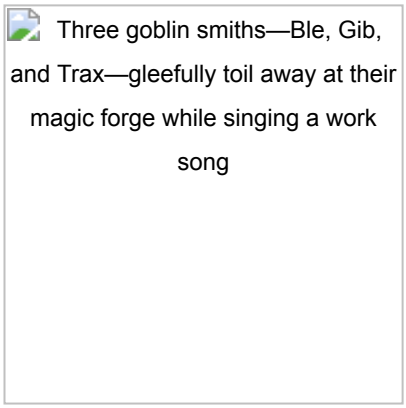
Blessed by a long-forgotten god, the Forge of Gibbletrax is a magic forge stewarded by three **Goblin Warriors** named Ble, Gib, and Trax. These smiths craft gear to defend against the dungeon's threats.

The goblins are initially Friendly toward the characters but defend themselves if necessary. If the characters approach the goblins peacefully, the goblins greet the characters warmly and ask what brings them to the dungeon.

Ble, Glib, and Trax usually keep to themselves, but they recently clashed with the gnolls in *area D6*, whose profane rituals threaten the sanctity of the forge. If the characters agree to end the gnolls' foul rites, the goblins vow to imbue the characters' weapons with the forge's magic.

Forge of Gibbletrax. The goblins' magical forge can temporarily infuse weapons and ammunition with immense heat. As a Bonus Action, a character can dip one weapon or piece of ammunition into the forge, coating it in a thin layer of molten ore. A creature that takes damage from the ore-coated weapon or ammunition takes an extra 1d6 Fire damage. Once coated, the weapon retains its heat for 10 minutes or until its damage is dealt, whichever comes first.

A character can benefit from the Forge of Gibbletrax only once, unless the goblins permit them to do so again. If all three goblins are slain or the forge is removed from this area, its magic ceases to function.


Three goblin smiths—Ble, Gib, and Trax—gleefully toil away at their magic forge while singing a work song

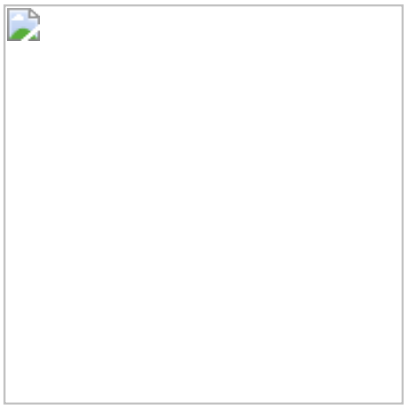
> ***You can do this!***
>
> *Sure, these smiths could have been dwarves, but that would've been BORING. Anyone can be a smith, just like anyone can be a Dungeon Master.*

D5: Den of Itsy

> *Thick, sticky webs cover this once-regal chamber. Skeletons encased in cocoons hang from webs on the ceiling as grim warnings to all who enter.*
>
> *A cobwebbed statue of an eight-foot-tall, armor-clad knight presides over the chamber. Before it is a stone pedestal, atop which rests a shimmering crystal spider roughly five feet in diameter. A fiery greatsword burns within the crystal spider's body, casting a warm, orange glow on the tangled nest.*

- **DM Secret!** Don't reveal the **Giant Spider** yet. This monster is hiding.

This room is the nest of Itsy, a **Giant Spider** that preys on any who enter its lair. The Hostile spider clings to the ceiling, guarding the secret door and treasure in this room (detailed below). If a character opens the secret door or disturbs the crystal spider, Itsy begins combat.



Crystal Spider. The crystal spider is a Medium object with AC 13, HP 50, Resistance to Piercing and Slashing damage, and Immunity to Poison and Psychic damage. Destroying the crystal spider frees the treasure inside (detailed below).

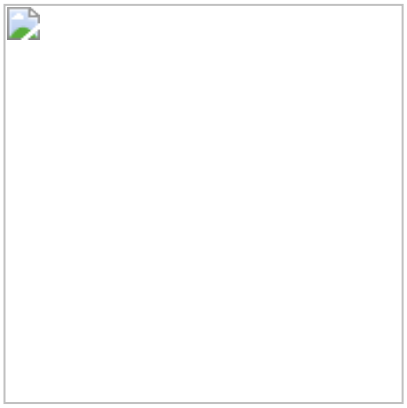
Secret Door. Set into the east wall of this room is a secret door (see "Dungeon Features") that connects to area S5.

Statue. The statue depicts a knight in a gallant pose. As a Study action, a character can examine the statue and make a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a successful check, the character realizes the statue's base is unstable; a significant push could topple the statue.

As an action, a character within 5 feet of the statue can make a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to topple the statue into a space within 5 feet of it, doing so on a successful check. When the statue topples, each creature beneath it takes 4d6 Bludgeoning damage and has the Prone condition. The statue crumbles on impact, revealing a treasure hidden inside it (see "Treasure" below).

Webs. The web-filled areas are Difficult Terrain.

A creature that enters a web-filled area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity Saving Throw or have the Restrained condition. As an action, a creature Restrained by the webs can try to escape from them, doing so with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.



Each 5-foot Cube of webs has AC 10; HP 7; Vulnerability to Fire damage; and Immunity to Piercing, Poison, and Psychic damage.

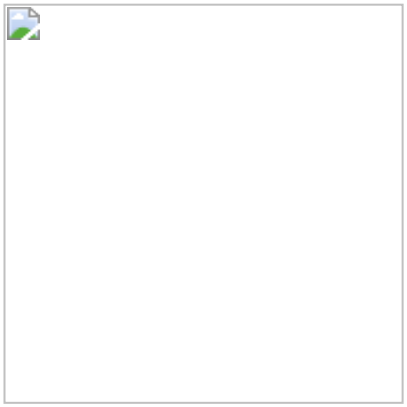
Treasure. Inside the statue is a heart-shaped emerald worth 30 GP. The sword encased in the crystal spider is a * Flame Tongue (Greatsword)*.

D6: Altar of Yeenoghu

> *In this square chamber, three hyenoid warriors kneel before an altar bearing a wicked-looking flail. Two of the creatures cackle maniacally as the third—the mangiest of the three who's nearly devoid of hair—chants, "Yeenoghu! Hear our laughter and let there be bloodshed and butchery!" The flail glows with sickly light.*

These three **Gnoll Warriors** worship Yeenoghu, a merciless demon lord who delights in slaughter. The Hostile gnolls fight all other creatures on sight.

Completing the Ritual. If the characters don't interrupt the gnolls, they continue their ritual. After 1 minute, booming laughter erupts from the altar. Any creatures other than the gnolls in this area must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 1d8 Thunder damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.



After the ritual, the gnolls leave to battle the goblins in *area D4*. If the characters don't intervene, the gnolls overpower the goblins, and the Forge of Gibbletrax loses its magic forever.

Treasure. The flail on the altar is a *+1 Flail*.

Shadow Dungeon

Beneath the Dungeon of Shadows lies the Shadow Dungeon, a gloomy reflection of the dungeon that borders the Vale of Shadows. Though its chambers mirror the areas above, their contents differ, distorted by the eerie realm they border.

Finding Flizzlebin

To find Flizzlebin, the characters must defeat the Demogorgon spawn and any Hostile creatures in Flizzlebin's hiding spot (see the "Hide-and-Seek" section earlier in this adventure). When both conditions are met, the gnome appears to the characters; proceed to this adventure's conclusion.

If the characters reach Flizzlebin's hiding spot before they vanquish the Demogorgon spawn, read or paraphrase the following text:

> *"Ah! You found my hiding spot! But your work isn't done yet," says a familiar voice. "To claim your prize, you must slay the horrid creature that hunts me."*

Flizzlebin doesn't bequeath his reward until the characters comply with his instructions. At your discretion, he might reveal the Demogorgon spawn's location—likely area S4.

Shadow Dungeon Features

The Shadow Dungeon has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The ceilings are 20 feet high in rooms and 10 feet high in passages.
- **Lighting.** The dungeon is unlit. Area descriptions assume the characters have a light source or other means of seeing in Darkness. Bare iron sconces line the walls.
- **Doors and Secret Doors.** Doors are unlocked and made of basalt. Secret doors manifest as spidery, elastic fissures that blend in with their surroundings and exude faint rays of natural light when opened. As a Search action, a character can examine a wall that contains a secret door and make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, noticing it on a successful check.

Shadow Dungeon Locations

The characters can enter and leave the Shadow Dungeon through the secret door that connects *areas D3* and S3 or the secret door that connects *areas D5* and S5. The following locations are keyed to the upside-down portion of the Dungeon of Shadows map.

S1: Chamber of Bad Choices

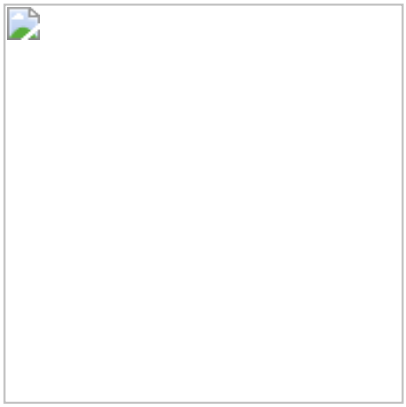
> *This eerie chamber has five stone doors, each bearing a vile image and inscription. A dead dwarf is slumped in a shadowy corner. The corpse clutches a torn sheet of parchment in its stiff hand. Near the dwarf, a stone staircase blocked by rubble ascends into darkness.*

This room mirrors the Chamber of Choice (*area D1*). The corpse is that of a dwarf explorer who perished four days ago while searching for Flizzlebin. The dwarf was killed by an Undead shadow.

The dwarf's body is unnaturally thin, and its clothes look too big. A character can inspect the corpse and make a DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check. On a successful check, the character discerns the dwarf's life was sapped by a supernatural force.

The dwarf clutches a note. If the characters remove it from the corpse, show the players the Dungeon Warning Handout. After the characters read the note, a **Shadow** rises from the dwarf's corpse and begins combat.

{@5etoolsImg Dungeon Warning Handout|pdf/WttHC/000-warning-note.pdf}



Doors. Each of the five doors is adorned with a relief sculpture and an inscription as follows:

- Door to S2 (Urn). This door bears the image of an urn wrapped in ink-black vines. The inscription reads "Wasteland of Filthy Vines."
- Door to S3 (Labyrinth). This door's relief depicts a fungal maze. The inscription reads, "Labyrinth of Gloom."
- Door to S4 (Spiked Anvil). In this door's relief, a shadowy figure looms over a spiked anvil. The inscription reads, "Forge of Annihilation."
- Door to S5 (Web). A black spiderweb is etched into this door. The inscription reads "Den of Bitsy."
- Door to S6 (Hand and Eye). A desiccated hand holding an eye decorates this door. Deep scratches make the inscription illegible.

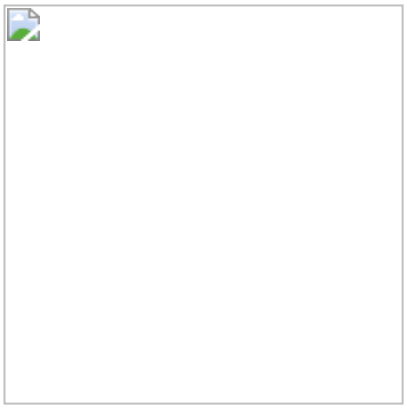
Staircase. The staircase, blocked by rubble, leads to the Vale of Shadows. That realm and its contents are beyond the scope of this adventure, but you can flesh them out as you see fit. Otherwise, the staircase is impassible.

S2: Wasteland of Filthy Vines

> *Slithering black vines squirm along the floor of this trash-filled room.*

This room mirrors the Wasteland of Filth (*area D2*). The floor is Difficult Terrain.

Treasure. The first character to sift through the trash and succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check unearths five cracked urns hewn from black granite. The urns are worthless. Four of the urns are empty, but one contains a *Potion of Healing* and a glass eye with an emerald pupil worth 10 GP.



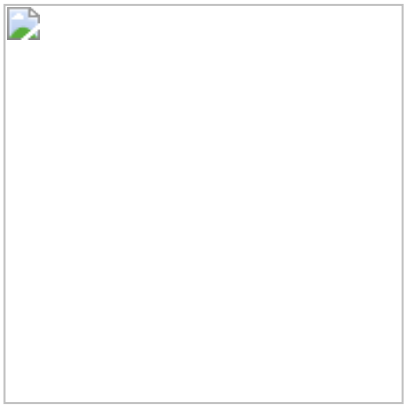
S3: Labyrinth of Gloom

> *Clouds of spores drift throughout this stone labyrinth. The maze is overgrown with fungi and foot-tall mushrooms that sprout from the walls and floor.*

This stone maze mirrors the Labyrinth of Doom (*area D3*). The maze is home to toxic plants and four **Shrieker Fungi**. Two Hostile **Myconid Adults** also roam the maze, fighting any non-Plants they encounter.

If the shriekers sound off, the myconids investigate the disturbance. The shriekers don't shriek if the myconids come within 30 feet of them.

Secret Door. A secret door (see "Shadow Dungeon Features") is set into the wall near the southeast corner of the maze. It leads to *area D3*.



Spore Traps. The labyrinth contains three spore traps—swollen plant bulbs that exhale puffs of toxic spores—triggered by stepping on pressure plates of inflated mushrooms. These traps are marked on Dungeon of Shadows map with a "T." The fungus-infested walls obscure the bulbs that spray these spores.

Each spore trap has the following rules:

- **Detect and Disarm.** As a Study action, a character can examine the walls and make a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check, identifying the toxic bulbs on a successful check. Alternatively, a character can take the Study action to inspect the floor and make a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, identifying the fungal pressure plate on a successful check. Trimming the stems that connect the bulbs to the pressure plate prevents the trap from triggering.
- **Triggering the Trap.** When a creature moves onto a pressure plate for the first time on a turn, the bulbs spray toxic spores that fill a 5-foot Cube centered on the pressure plate. Each creature in the Cube must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution Saving Throw or have the Poisoned condition for 1 hour. The trap resets immediately.

Treasure. A dilapidated chest in the middle of the labyrinth contains a broken wand and 25 GP. The wand is useless.

S4: Forge of Annihilation

> *An unholy forge dominates this grim chamber. Caustic fumes waft from its icy hearth, which swirls with a faintly glowing, pale-green slurry. Skulls bob along the liquid's surface.*

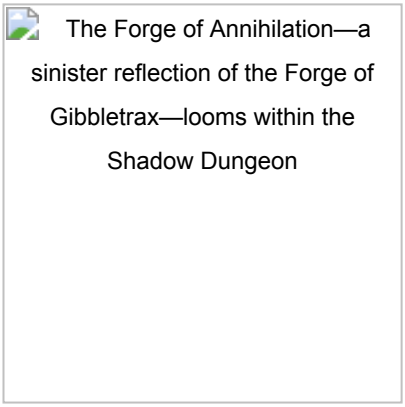
This room mirrors the Forge of Gibbletrax (*area D4*). If the **Demogorgon spawn** survived its previous encounter with the characters (see *area D3*), it lurks here. Read or paraphrase the following text:

> *A familiar, horrible creature—the same creature you encountered in the labyrinth above—rises from the shadow of the forge. It unfurls its faceless head once more and chitters in anticipation.*
>
> *Roll Initiative!*

The **Demogorgon Spawn** fights to the death.

Forge of Annihilation. Unlike the goblins' blessed forge in the dungeon above, this forge is a cursed apparatus capable only of destruction. The Forge of Annihilation causes living creatures to wither and die. As a Study action, a character can inspect the forge and make a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a successful check, the character identifies the eldritch hazard and the threat it poses.

A creature that enters the forge for the first time or starts its turn there must make a DC 15 Constitution Saving Throw, taking 4d8 Necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.



The Forge of Annihilation—a sinister reflection of the Forge of Gibbletrax—looms within the Shadow Dungeon

S5: Den of Bitsy

> *A statue of an eight-foot-tall knight with a horned, crimson helm stands in this chamber, which is covered in thick, black webs. Atop an altar in the center of the room, a massive spider with dripping fangs wraps a dead elf in webs.*
>
> *Humanoid-shaped cocoons—the arachnid's ghastly larder—hang throughout the chamber.*

This room mirrors the Den of Itsy (*area D5*). It belongs to Bitsy, an equally territorial **Giant Spider**. Bitsy fights the characters on sight.

Secret Door. Set into the east wall in this room is a secret door (see "Shadow Dungeon Features") that connects to *area D5*.

Statue. The statue depicts a knight with a menacing helm. As a Study action, a character can examine the statue and make a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a successful check, the character realizes the statue's base is unstable; a significant push could topple the statue.

As an action, a character within 5 feet of the statue can make a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to topple the statue into a space within 5 feet of it, doing so on a successful check. When the statue topples, each creature beneath it takes 4d6 Bludgeoning damage and has the Prone condition. The statue crumbles on impact, revealing treasure within (see "Treasure" below), but its helm remains intact.

Webs. The web-filled areas are Difficult Terrain.

A creature that enters a web-filled area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity Saving Throw or have the Restrained condition. As an action, a creature Restrained by the webs can try to escape from them, doing so with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

Each 5-foot Cube of webs has AC 10; HP 7; Vulnerability to Fire damage; and Immunity to Piercing, Poison, and Psychic damage.

Treasure. The statue's helmet is a crimson *Dread Helm* that resembles the head of a horned devil. Inside the statue is a heart-shaped black tourmaline worth 30 GP.

S6: Altar of Vecna

> *Low fog pervades this eerily quiet chamber. A stone altar rises from the center of the floor. Atop the altar, a dismembered hand grasps an hourglass half-filled with black sand and adorned with bone spindles. The sand defies gravity, flowing to the top bulb.*

This room mirrors the Altar of Yeenoghu (*area D6*), but this altar honors evil of a viler caliber.

The first character to inspect the hourglass hears the sound of a ticking clock, followed by a baleful chime. The hourglass then cracks, and the sand spills out, revealing a mummified eye within the lower bulb. No other character hears the sound.

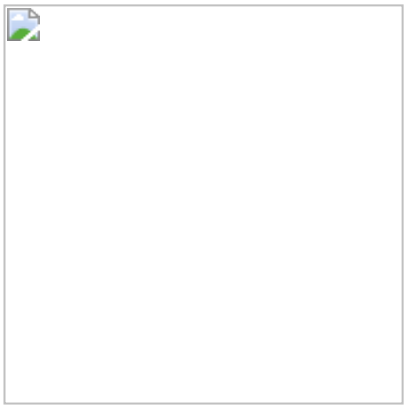
Afterward, a character can examine the altar's contents and make a DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check. On a successful check, the character recognizes the hand and the eye as the symbol of Vecna, a powerful lich feared throughout Greyhawkins. The hourglass is a ceremonial object used by members of Vecna's cult to symbolize the lich's dreaded—and inevitable—return.

Conclusion

After the characters defeat the Demogorgon spawn and locate **Flizzlebin**, the gnome rewards them. Read or paraphrase the following:

> *A bearded gnome in a fancy cap addresses you enthusiastically. "Bravery, majesty, and teamwork!" he exclaims. "How wonderful it was to guide you on your quest." He removes his cap.*
>
> *"For your heroism, I bestow on you my magic cap. But know this: The real treasures were the bonds you formed along the way.*
>
> *"Go forth! Many great adventures await you."*

For their efforts, Flizzlebin gives the characters his *Cap of Vanishing*. If one of the characters didn't find a magic item during the adventure, the gnome presents the cap to that character.



Flizzlebin is Friendly and willing to speak to the characters. During conversation, he fondly recalls the characters' deeds and commends them on their creativity, heroism, or any other qualities you deem appropriate. He then wishes them farewell and vanishes once more, disappearing to a faraway dungeon to challenge a new group of adventurers.

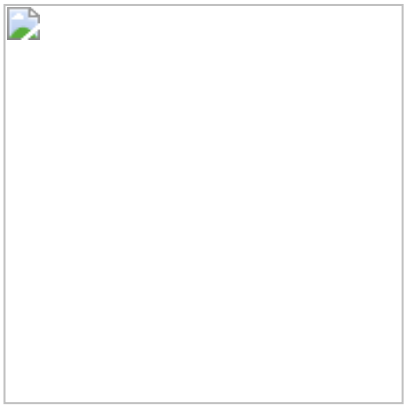
Character Advancement

After the characters receive Flizzlebin's reward, everyone in the party gains 1 level. Direct each player to record any treasure they found over the course of this adventure.

> *You can bring back Flizzlebin the next time you want to send the characters to a dungeon or reward a player with an item they've been pestering you about. Mike is the worst with this.*
>
> *"Eddie! When are we going to level up?"*
>
> *"Eddie! When do I get a Vorpal Sword?"*
>
> *Obnoxious. Make him work for it.*

Scream of the Crop

An Adventure for Level 2 Characters



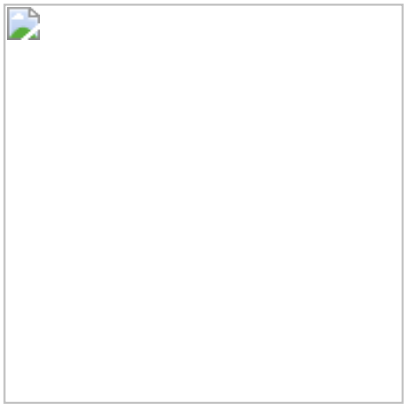
This adventure is designed to fill one or two sessions of play.

If you aren't using the *Map of Greyhawkins*, it can take place near any agrarian settlement.

Key Plot Points

This information is key to the adventure's story:

- **Plot Point 1.** Rillard Senior, a local farmer, hires the characters to find his missing granddaughter, **Rilly June**, and investigate a string of unusual events around his farm.
- **Plot Point 2.** During their search, the characters stumble on a network of tunnels beneath Rillard Family Farm.
- **Plot Point 3.** The characters follow the tunnels to the source of the trouble: a Gulthias tree, a wicked sapling spawned from the stake of a slain vampire. Along the way, the characters confront subterranean monsters and living plants corrupted by the Gulthias tree.
- **Plot Point 4.** The characters find Rilly June and destroy the Gulthias tree and the demonic hounds that guard it.



DM Preparation

Before running the adventure, prepare as follows:

- **Step 1.** Read the "Adventure Background" section.
- **Step 2.** Familiarize yourself with the Missing Person Poster Handout and the Farm Tunnels Map.
- **Step 3.** Familiarize yourself with the creatures in this adventure, which are as follows:
- 1 **Ankheg**
- 1 **Commoner**
- 3 **Demodogs**
- 3 **Needle Blights**
- **Rilly June**

- 1 **Scarecrow**
- 2 **Vine Blight Tanglers**
- 2 **Violet Fungi**
- **Step 4.** Familiarize yourself with the magic items in this adventure, which are as follows:
- *+1 Dart*
- *Periapt of Health*
- *Poison-Soaked Kukri*
- *Potion of Resistance (Acid)*

Player Assistance

You can simplify the DM's role by having the other players handle tasks typically assigned to the DM. Before play begins, work with the other players to divide the following tasks among them:

- **Monster Wranglers.** Whenever the characters encounter Hostile monsters, one or two players can run these monsters using the referenced stat blocks.
- **Rules Consultant.** One player references the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules) as needed.

Adventure Background

In decades past, the vampire Gunthar the Gluttonous terrorized the people of Goldenwheat. Gunthar and his three faithful hounds threatened to drink the farmers and their livestock dry. When all hope seemed lost, a group of brave heroes slew Gunthar in his crypt and plunged a stake into his heart. They left the crypt victorious, sealing the crypt behind them and leaving a stake buried in the vampire's corpse.

Over time, the blood-soaked stake warped and sprouted a Gulthias tree, a plant infused with evil essence. Malignance spreads from this tree, destroying crops, corrupting soil, and spawning awakened plants with a taste for blood. The tree's evil was contained for a time within Gunthar's crypt, and farms flourished in a land the vampire had filled with despair—until now.

An ankheg hungry for local livestock recently tunneled into Gunthar's crypt. The Gulthias tree's roots reached into the ankheg's tunnels, infecting them with blights and fungi and spoiling the crops above. The tree's vile tendrils even worked their way into the corpses of Gunthar's hounds. Returned to life and mutated by the tree, these bloodthirsty dogs loyally guard their master's resting place and destroy any who threaten the Gulthias tree.

A local farmer has reached out to the characters, hoping they can put an end to the blight affecting his crops and those of other nearby farms. If the disease continues to spread, the ensuing food shortage could prove disastrous.

Rillard Senior, a halfling farmer, looks out at his blight-ridden farm

Beginning the Adventure

The bucolic hills of Goldenwheat hold fields of corn, seas of grain, and patches of plump pumpkins. Located along a prominent trail in southern Greyhawkins, these fertile farms regularly supply the region with bountiful harvests. At least one farm, however, has been struggling recently.

A brutal blight has struck Rillard Family Farm. For years, Rillard Senior, his granddaughter, and their hired hands have been a reliable source of wheat, producing hundreds of bushels each fall. If the blight isn't dealt with soon, some towns might go without bread this winter.

The adventure begins in Goldenwheat and assumes the characters have already accepted this heroic undertaking. Read or paraphrase the following text to begin the adventure:

> > *As you crest the hill into Goldenwheat, a pathetic sight greets you: a barren stretch of wilted gray stalks, collapsed gourds, and cracked earth. A stale breeze sweeps over the farms, carrying the stench of decay.*
> >
> > *Near the road, a sad-looking scarecrow slumps on its stand, its rotting pumpkin head hung low and swarming with flies. Ahead, a wooden sign swings from a crooked post. It reads "Rillard Family Farm." Further up the road, a small farmhouse sits among the barren fields.*

If the characters disturb the scarecrow, it falls apart. Otherwise, when a character next looks toward it, the scarecrow has mysteriously vanished.

> *Foreshadowing is one of the most important skills in your DM toolbox, but players can throw you for a loop. The scarecrow the characters pass here is supposed to be the one they encounter later in the tunnels beneath the farm, but if they **** with it, you'll have to pretend that was a totally different scarecrow. Hint at the scarecrow along the road without making it seem too interesting or important. Then wait for the juicy reveal.*

Arriving at Rillard Family Farm

Rillard Family Farm grows crops and raises livestock as part of the Goldenwheat farming collective. When the characters arrive at the farmhouse, read or paraphrase the following text:

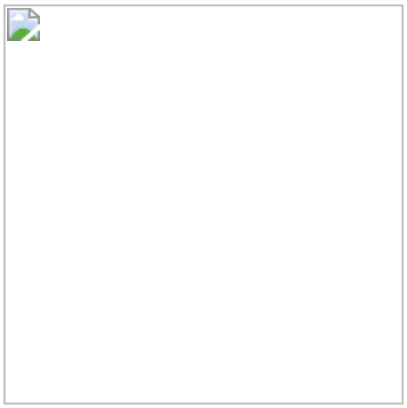
> > *The Rillard farmhouse is a humble two-story home with a wraparound porch. An elderly halfling wearing a straw hat sits in a rocking chair on the porch, staring at the blighted fields.*
> >
> > *The chair creaks as the halfling rises slowly. He looks you over while scratching his bushy sideburns and nods. "Well met," he says.*
> >
> > *"Y'all look like a band of capable folks. I'm Rillard Senior, but you can call me Ol' Rill. I hate to admit it, but my farm and my family are in a heap of trouble. I'm hoping y'all can help us out. These old bones ain't made for adventuring."*

Rillard (Small, Neutral Good **Commoner**) is a lifelong farmer who periodically hires adventurers to help around his farm and ward off varmints. He is Friendly toward the characters and treats them with respect. After a brief introduction, Rillard explains that strange happenings have befallen his farm. He shares the following details:

- **Blighted Crops.** The crops on the farm are dying, even after magical intervention by a traveling mage. Rillard doesn't know the blight's cause.
- **Missing Person.** Rillard's granddaughter, Rilly June, is missing. Rillard says she's a tough cookie who can hold her own even after a hard day's work on the farm, but he's starting to worry. He hasn't seen her in two days.
- **Stolen Scarecrows.** Meddlesome whippersnappers have been stealing Rillard's scarecrows, each of which has a pumpkin for a head. If the characters mention they saw one along the road (see "Beginning the Adventure"), Rillard remarks that one of his scarecrows was plucked from that very spot a few days ago, but he hadn't replaced it yet. He jokes that the scarecrow might have "up and run off on its own."
- **Vanishing Livestock.** Someone has been poaching Rillard's heifers. He locks the barn every night, but one cow disappears every other night.

Rillard's Request

Rillard asks the characters to find his granddaughter and investigate the unusual events around his farm. He offers them 200 GP to find Rilly June and unearth the source of the blight.



If the characters accept, Rillard provides them with a sketch of Rilly June that he was planning to give to the authorities. Show your players the Missing Person Poster. Rillard also loans the party his great granddaddy's *Poison-Soaked Kukri*, hoping it will aid them in their exploration.

Story Time

If the characters accept Rillard's quest, he thanks them kindly and says they remind him of the brave heroes who saved these lands long ago. Rillard then briefly recounts the story of the vampire Gunthar the Gluttonous (as detailed in this adventure's background), though he knows nothing of the ankheg tunnels or the Gulthias tree beneath his farm.

Rillard adds that some say Gunthar cursed these farmlands with his last breath, while others say the vampire haunts these lands still. The old farmer believes the story is simply used to scare young children so they return home before nightfall.

Exploring the Farm

The characters can investigate any of the events Rillard observed, each of which leads them to one of the tunnels beneath the farm (detailed in the following section). Rillard can point them in the right direction as follows:

- **Blighted Crops.** If the characters go into the fields to investigate the crops, they stumble on a tunnel entrance hidden behind a rotten bale of wheat. The tunnel slopes down to area T1.
- **Missing Person.** If the characters search the farmhouse for clues to Rilly June's whereabouts, they happen on several loose floorboards in the basement that, when pried up, reveal an earthen tunnel. The tunnel descends to area T6.
- **Stolen Scarecrow.** If the characters return to where they last saw the scarecrow, they quickly find a trail of straw that leads to a hole in the ground. It leads to area T3.
- **Vanishing Livestock.** If the characters explore the barn, they find a hole beneath a partially collapsed hay pile. It leads to area T4.

> *Listen, I get it. Everyone wants to adopt a friendly NPC to tag along on a quest—hell, devious players even use them as dungeon cannon fodder. Point is, this is where you can put your foot down, and say, "Nope, Ol' Rill ain't goin' with you." He's like eighty years old.*

Farm Tunnels

Beneath Rillard Family Farm lies a network of tunnels dug by a ravenous ankheg. The ankheg inadvertently burrowed into the sealed crypt of Gunthar the Gluttonous, unleashing the roots of the Gulthias tree that grows there. The tree's roots have spread rapidly from the dead vampire's resting place, overtaking the tunnels and releasing a rash of blights to wreak havoc on the surrounding farms.

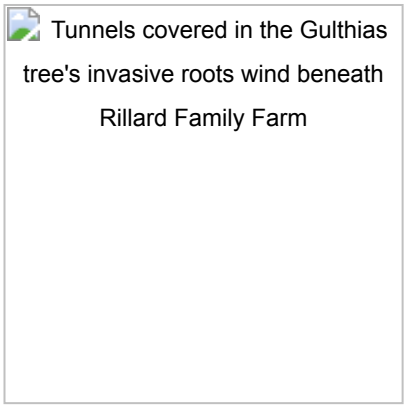
When the characters enter the tunnels, the Player Characters' starting location on the Farm Tunnels Map is based on which event they investigated (see "Exploring the Farm"). Don't reveal the locations of the tunnels' other contents at the outset, as they aren't yet visible to the characters.

Tunnel Features

Unless otherwise noted, the tunnels have the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The ceilings are 10 feet high.
- **Lighting.** The tunnels are unlit. Creatures rely on Darkvision, Blindsight, or Tremorsense to see. Area descriptions assume the characters have a light source or other means of seeing in Darkness.
- **Roots and Vines.** Writhing, ink-black roots and vines pervade the tunnels. Areas covered in roots (as denoted on the map) are Difficult Terrain. As a Study action, a character can inspect the plants and make a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check; a successful check reveals the vegetation is corrupted by a malevolent supernatural force.

Tunnel Locations



The following locations are keyed to the Farm Tunnels Map. That map also shows the locations of characters and monsters in the tunnels.

T1: Entrance Tunnel

> *A thin mist rises from a dirt tunnel. Writhing black vines cling to the earthen walls. A distant, bone-chilling howl echoes from the depths.*

The howl originated in Gunthar's crypt (area T9), where the late vampire's monstrous hounds reside. A character who hears the howl and succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Nature) check knows that no ordinary dog or wolf can produce such a sound.

The tunnel exits to a field on Rillard Family Farm.

T2: Fungus-Infested Tunnel

> *Two plants shaped like droplets with purple lattice-like branches sprout from the ground in this tunnel. Their tendrils snake toward the ceiling and intertwine with vines that cover every surface.*

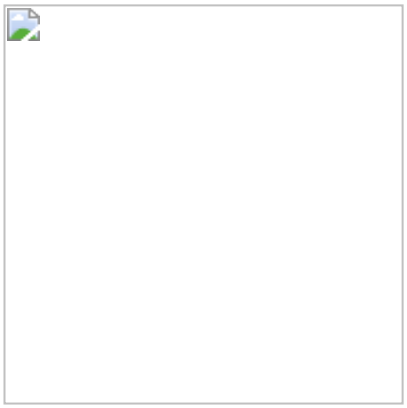
- **DM Secret!** Don't reveal the location of the **Vine Blight Tanglers** yet. These monsters are hiding. At the start of combat, any character who didn't notice these blights has Disadvantage on their Initiative roll.

The purple plants are two **Violet Fungi**. Two Vine Blight Tanglers hide among the Gulthias roots. As a Search action, a character can survey the area and make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, detecting the blights on a successful check. The fungi and blights are Hostile toward all non-Plant creatures. If such a creature comes within 10 feet of the plants or otherwise disturbs them, they enter combat.

T3: Spore-Filled Tunnel

> *Tiny white spores drift through the air in this musty tunnel. Black vines creep up to the ceiling, where a shiny pendant hangs from a gnarled root, glinting innocently.*
>
> *Scarecrows stand silently throughout the chamber. Each has a rotten pumpkin for a head.*

- **DM Secret!** Don't reveal the **Scarecrow** yet. This monster is hiding. At the start of combat, any character who didn't notice the scarecrow has Disadvantage on their Initiative roll.

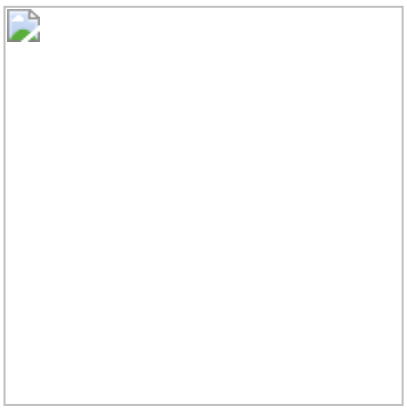


Though most of the scarecrows in this tunnel are inanimate, one of them is a Hostile Scarecrow. It remains motionless, hoping to ambush the characters. As a Study action, a character can inspect the scarecrows and make a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a successful check, the character recognizes the living scarecrow hiding among the inanimate ones.

If the characters disturb the pendant or the scarecrow, the scarecrow begins combat, surprising any characters who didn't identify it as a threat.

Stalking Scarecrow. If the characters don't fight the scarecrow in this area, it follows them after they leave this tunnel. It strikes when the characters are most vulnerable, such as immediately after combat with the ankheg (see area T5).

At your discretion, if the characters later return to this area, one or more scarecrows might be missing, suggesting that others might be hunting them.



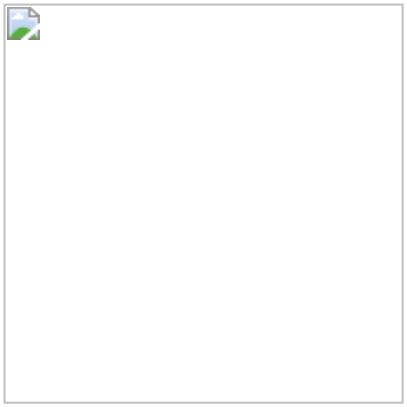
Toxic Spores. A cloud of toxic spores fills this area. When a creature enters the area, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or have the Poisoned condition for 1 minute. A creature that fails the save repeats it at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. A creature that succeeds on its save is immune to the effect of these spores for 24 hours.

Treasure. The pendant that hangs from the ceiling is a *Periapt of Health*.

T4: Ankheg's Nest

> > *The floor of this spacious chamber is ten feet lower than that of the three tunnels that branch from it. A horrid stench rises from the floor, where decaying cow carcasses and bovine bones twitch under a network of slowly constricting, otherworldly roots.*

- **DM Secret!** Don't reveal the **Needle Blights** yet. These monsters are hiding. At the start of combat, any character who didn't notice these blights has Disadvantage on their Initiative roll.

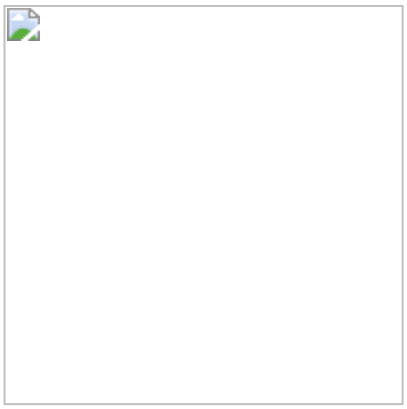


The ceilings in this chamber are 20 feet high. The tunnels that lead into this area end abruptly in a 10-foot drop. Along the sunken floor, wicked roots curl around the remains of the ankheg's meals.

Three Needle Blights hide among the roots and carcasses. As a Search action, a character can examine the floor and make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, detecting the blights on a successful check. The blights are Hostile toward the characters. If the characters step on the roots or disturb the carcasses, the blights begin combat.

Carcasses. As a Study action, a character can inspect the dead livestock and make a DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check. On a successful check, the character discerns that the cows were violently slain and dragged here by a hulking creature with acidic mandibles.

A character who inspects the carcasses can make a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check. If the check succeeds, the character realizes that this area is an ankheg's nest.



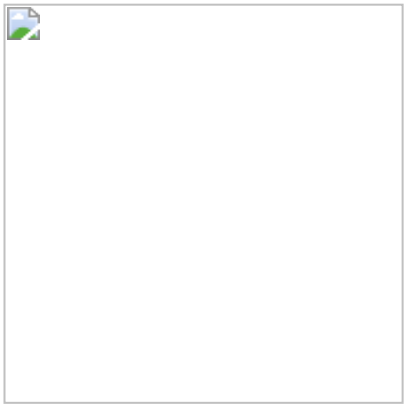
Treasure. Amid the carcasses is a burlap sack that contains a loaf of two-day-old bread, three apples, 5 GP, and a *Potion of Resistance* (Acid). The sack has the initials "R.J." stitched on it.

T5: Foggy Chamber

> *Thick fog fills this damp chamber, which smells of freshly dug dirt. Low, chitinous clacking noises echo within the obscuring mist, accompanied by the sounds of shifting earth and clattering rocks.*

- **DM Secret!** The ankheg has Tremorsense, which means it has no trouble finding its way through the fog or noticing the characters when they approach.

An **Ankheg** is using its mandibles to slowly widen this chamber. It is Hostile toward all other creatures and starts combat once it detects them.



Fog. This tunnel is Heavily Obscured by fog.

T6: Boneyard

> *Luminescent particles float throughout this chamber. Bones litter the earthen floor. Slithering roots worm their way over the graveyard and slowly deconstruct a skeleton clad in shredded leather armor.*
>
> *The particles gather around the dead warrior, twinkling as an echoing, disembodied voice calls to you. "Who goes there? Are you adventurers? I have been stuck here for an awfully long time. Can you free me?"*

- **DM Secret!** Don't reveal the **Vine Blight Tangler** yet. These monsters are part of the Gulthias Tree's roots and manifest only if those roots are attacked.

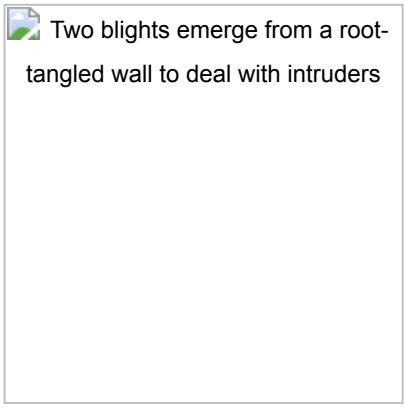
> *They go for the treasure every time I run this one. I thought the scarecrow was supposed to be the one who's missing a brain!*

The disembodied voice is that of Justine Fobarb, a human adventurer slain long ago. Her spirit is trapped within her entangled remains. Justine doesn't have a Monster Stat Block and can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect. She is initially Indifferent toward the characters, promising to share her story once freed.

The Gulthias tree's evil roots tether Justine's spirit to this area. A character who inspects the roots and succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check realizes that by destroying the roots, they can set Justine free.

Destroying the Roots. The Gulthias roots have AC 10; HP 15; and Immunity to Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Psychic damage. If the roots take damage, read or paraphrase the following text:

> > *The roots squeal and writhe in pain. "Look out!" cries the disembodied voice. The vines along the tunnel walls begin to peel away and curl into two bipedal figures that rush toward you.*
> >
> > *Roll Initiative!*


Two blights emerge from a root-tangled wall to deal with intruders

The two **Vine Blight Tanglers** fight the characters.

If the roots are destroyed, Justine's spirit passes to the afterlife, but not before warning the characters of the dangers that lurk within these tunnels.

What Justine Knows. If the characters free Justine's spirit, her attitude improves to Friendly, and she shares the following information:

- **Ankheg.** A big, acid-spitting bug roams these tunnels. It preys on the cattle above and drags them to its nest (area T4).
- **Demodogs.** The vampire Gunthar had three bloodthirsty hounds. Long after they met their end, they've returned as doglike monsters that guard Gunthar's final resting place (area T9).

- **Gulthias Tree.** A Gulthias tree is an accursed plant that might sprout from the blood-soaked stake of a slain vampire. Justine believes such a tree grows in Gunthar's crypt (area T9) and is the source of the blight that poisons this land. Fire can weaken a Gulthias tree, but the only way to truly destroy this evil is to uproot it completely.
- **Vampire.** The vampire legends are true. Long ago, Justine's adventuring party hunted down Gunthar and drove a stake through his heart. But Justine was slain by one of Gunthar's minions, and her fellow party members abandoned her in their quest for glory. Justine's spirit lingered, vainly hoping they would return; eventually, the roots became her cage.

> ***Never split the party, kids.***
>
> *What kind of despicable adventurers would abandon a fellow party member when they needed them most? Poor Justine.*

After Justine shares what she knows, the twinkling motes fade, and silence falls over the tunnel once more.

Treasure. After destroying the roots, a character can inspect Justine's remains. Around her skeleton's neck hangs a silver emblem of Heironeous, a god of chivalry, honor, and justice. The emblem is shaped like a lightning bolt and is worth 25 GP.

T7: Vine-Covered Tunnel

> *The tunnel walls disappear behind a mass of snaking black vines. Two bipedal creatures covered in thorns stand between you and the next bend. The spiny guardians take turns scratching their bristling hides with a rusty rake. Farming tools are scattered across the ground.*

- **DM Secret!** Don't reveal the **Vine Blight Tangler** yet. These monsters are hiding. At the start of combat, any character who didn't notice these blights has Disadvantage on their Initiative roll.

Two **Needle Blights** use a stolen rake to scratch each other's backs in this tunnel. Two **Vine Blight Tanglers** hide among the vines along the walls, waiting to ambush any non-Plant creatures that pass through this area. The blights are Hostile toward the characters.

As a Search action, a character can scan the vine-covered walls and make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a successful check, the character spots the Vine Blight Tanglers.

Treasure. Among the rusty farming tools are a pair of gardening gloves, a hoe, a shovel, and an heirloom ring worth 10 GP.

T8: Crypt Antechamber

> *You stand before the entrance to a buried crypt. Thick vines cover its crumbling stone doors, and gnarled black roots weave across the chamber floor. Near the doors, the vines wrap around a halfling farmhand. She's out cold.*

The adventurers who defeated Gunthar sealed the doors to his crypt (area T9). When the ankheg began burrowing beneath Rillard Family Farm, it demolished the doors, unleashing the Gulthias tree and the blight it brings.

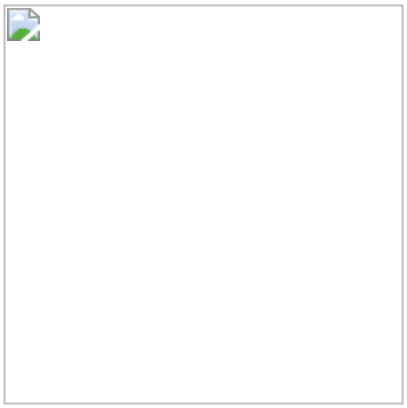
The Gulthias tree's roots restrain Rilly June

The farmhand is **Rilly June**, Rillard's granddaughter, whom the characters can easily identify thanks to the sketch her grandfather provided. Rilly June has the Restrained and Unconscious conditions, but she is otherwise unharmed.

Freeing Rilly June. As an action, a character can make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to free Rilly June from the vines, doing so on a successful check. Once freed, Rilly June wakes up and introduces herself. She is Friendly toward the characters, and can share the following information:

- **Tunnel.** Rilly June heard digging sounds in the farmhouse basement, where she found a tunnel. She followed the tunnel, hoping it might reveal clues about the blighted crops, but she was ambushed by strange creatures and brought here.
- **Unusual Tree.** Rilly June caught a peek at the crypt (area T9). Somehow, there's a tree growing underground there.
- **You Have My Pitchfork!** Rilly June volunteers to accompany the characters as they confront the source of the blight. Her farm is in peril, so she has a right to help defend it.

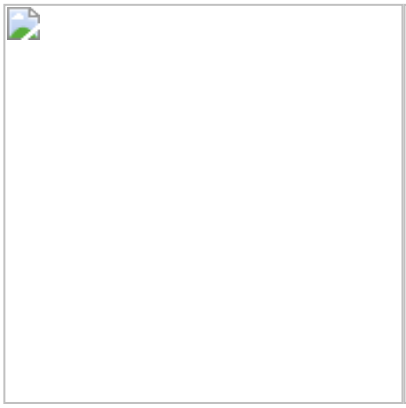
A character can try to convince Rilly June to return to the surface by using an Influence action to make a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a successful check, Rilly June begrudgingly returns to the safety of the farmhouse. Otherwise, she accompanies the characters for the rest of this adventure.

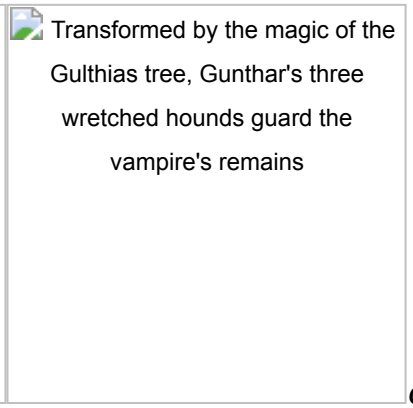


T9: Gunthar's Crypt

> *A black-barked tree looms crookedly over this eerie crypt. The tree's gnarled branches press against the fifteen-foot-high ceiling, and its twisted trunk rises from the splintered lid of a closed coffin encaged in knotted roots. Squirming vines wriggle along the crypt's walls.*
>
> *Three hideous dogs with eyeless faces growl as they pace around the tree.*

This crypt once belonged to Gunthar the Gluttonous. The tree that protrudes from Gunthar's coffin is a Gulthias tree, sprouted from the stake plunged into the vampire's chest. Though the vampire is long vanquished, the tree's magic resurrected his three loyal hounds and transformed them into Demodogs. The Demodogs are Hostile toward all non-Plant creatures and defend their master's remains.





Transformed by the magic of the Gulthias tree, Gunthar's three wretched hounds guard the vampire's remains

Gulthias Tree. This Gulthias tree is a Huge object that has AC 15; HP 50; Immunity to Necrotic, Poison, and Psychic damage; and Vulnerability to Fire damage. If the tree is reduced to 0 Hit Points, read or paraphrase the following text:

> *The tree screeches as it withers and dies. Silence falls over the crypt, but the tree remains defiantly in place, its roots anchored deep into the earth.*

Unless the Gulthias tree is uprooted, it regrows in 3d10 days. As a Study action, a character can examine the tree and make a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a successful check, the character knows the Gulthias tree will regrow if left in the earth.

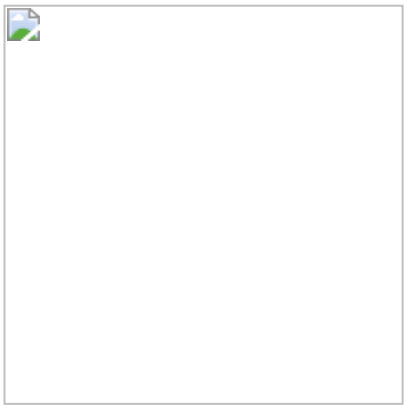
To uproot the tree, a character must succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. If Rilly June is with the characters, she takes the Help action to assist them with this endeavor.

If the tree is uprooted, its effects end immediately, and all remaining **Needle Blights** and **Vine Blight Tanglers** within the tunnels die.

Treasure. After uprooting the Gulthias tree, the characters can access the contents of Gunthar's wrecked coffin. Inside are the vampire's desiccated corpse and the following items:

- A *+1 Dart* in the shape of a strange pollywog
- An amulet sporting a delicate crystal spider, which is worth 25 GP
- A blue silk handkerchief with gold embroidery, which is worth 5 GP
- A pouch that contains 50 GP

Fearing these items were cursed, the adventurers who slew Gunthar refused to take them.



Conclusion

When the characters return to the farmhouse, Rillard awaits them on the front porch. How he greets them depends on whether his granddaughter made it home safely.

If the characters rescued Rilly June from the tunnels beneath the farm, Rillard is elated to see them. Read or paraphrase the following text:

> *As you approach the farmhouse, Rillard leaps from his rocking chair. "Well yank my sideburns and call me cornbread. It turns out real heroes do still exist!" he exclaims.*
>
> *Rillard tips his hat. "You have done my family and this farm an immeasurable kindness. Why don't y'all come on in and rest a while? I've got pumpkin soup on the stove. You've earned it."*

If Rilly June accompanies the characters on their quest to end the blight, you can either run Rilly June yourself or give her Stat Block to another player. NPCs like her are a great way to deliver in-world hints or lore. Try not to get them killed.

Rillard invites the characters to stay the night and enjoy a home-cooked meal. He pays them before they set out on their next adventure. Rilly June and her grandfather invite the characters to revisit the farm any time, providing free, comfortable lodgings and a hot meal whenever the characters stop in.

If the characters return without Rilly June, read or paraphrase the following text:

> *As you approach the farmhouse, you spot Rillard in the same old rocking chair. He hasn't moved since you left.*
>
> *Rillard hangs his head in disappointment. "Alone, I see," he mutters. "I guess heroes just ain't what they used to be."*

If Rilly June met her end in the tunnels beneath the farm, Rillard's reward is the same, but he pays the characters solemnly and doesn't invite them to stay. Otherwise, Rillard urges the characters to return to the tunnels and rescue his granddaughter.

Rillard's Reward

Rillard pays the characters 200 GP as promised. He also lets the characters keep his great grandaddy's *Poison-Soaked Kukri*.

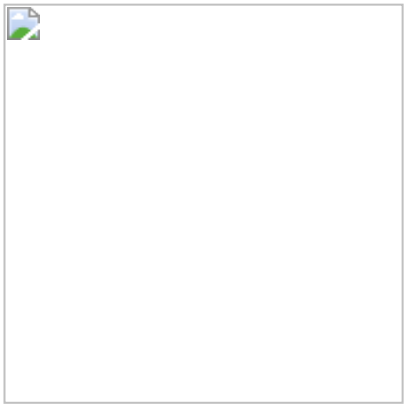
Character Advancement

After the characters receive Rillard's reward, everyone in the party gains 1 level. Direct each player to record any treasure they found over the course of this adventure.

> *Reward players who think outside of the box. It's called the Rule of Cool, a.k.a. the Don't-Be-A-Square Rule. Take the Gulthias tree, for example. If the characters want to cast a spell to break the roots, conduct a ritual to break the tree's magic, or lure the ankheg into melting it with acid—embrace their creativity! This is your table now, and you make the rules. Don't let them get in the way of a good time. As long as everyone is having fun, there's no wrong way to play D&D.*

Ballad of the Rat King

An Adventure for Level 3 Characters



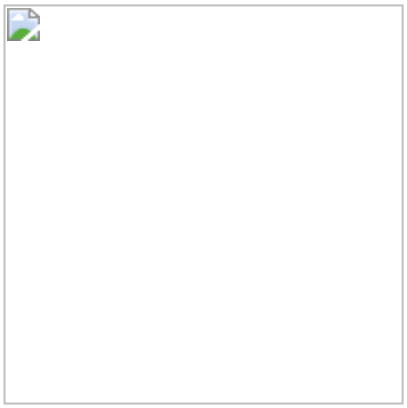
This adventure is designed to fill one or two sessions of play.

If you aren't using the *Map of Greyhawkins*, it can take place in any port town.

Key Plot Points

This information is key to the adventure's story:

This nautical-themed tavern caters to dockworkers, deck hands, and other dockside regulars. Its two human proprietors are siblings and former sailors, Jay Le'Buck and Jeeves Whalington (Medium, Chaotic Good **Commoners**). "Captain" Jeeves spends his days daydreaming about adventures at sea and entertaining patrons. His sister, Jay, handles the real work that keeps the business afloat. She tallies the day's sales on a small chalkboard.



- **Plot Point 1**. A guard named Fillius hires the characters to investigate a string of murders along the docks. The culprit is Korex, an ex-adventurer who commands a growing horde of sewer-dwelling rats with his magic pan flute.
- **Plot Point 2**. Deputized by Fillius as temporary members of the Oakshore Guard, the characters question townsfolk and search the dockside neighborhood for clues.
- **Plot Point 3**. After reporting their findings to Fillius, the characters set a trap for Korex. They confront Korex when he emerges from the sewers on the night of their investigation.

DM Preparation

Before running the adventure, prepare as follows:

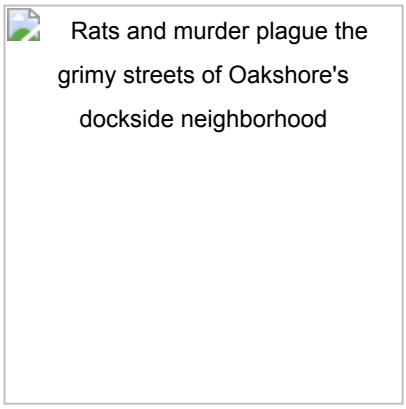
- **Step 1**. Read the "Adventure Background" section.
- **Step 2**. Familiarize yourself with the Oakshore Docks Map and the Writ of Authority Handout.
- **Step 4**. Familiarize yourself with the monsters and non-player characters in this adventure, which are as follows:
    - 6 **Commoners**
    - 1 **Cultist of Demogorgon**
    - 3 **Demobats**
    - 3 **Giant Corrupted Rats**
    - 1 **Guard**
    - **Korex**
    - 3 **Swarms of Corrupted Rats**
- **Step 5**. Familiarize yourself with the magic items in this adventure, which are as follows:
    - *Cloak of Billowing*
    - *Holly's Handy Haversack*
    - *Pipes of Pestilence*
    - *Potion of Healing*
    - *Potion of Resistance (Acid)*
    - *Speaking Stones*

> *This adventure is a cautionary tale for players who like to steal from their party members. Let this adventure serve as a warning—you can play whatever kind of character you want, but you must play nicely with others at the table.*

Player Assistance

You can simplify the DM's role by having the other players handle tasks typically assigned to the DM. Before play begins, work with the other players to divide the following tasks among them:

- **Monster Wranglers.** Whenever the characters encounter Hostile monsters, one or two players can run those monsters using their linked Stat Blocks. (If you have two players doing this, they can take turns.)
- **Rules Consultant.** One player references the *D&D Beyond Basic Rules* as needed.



Adventure Background

Korex the Cunning was once an adventurer and a musician who inspired his companions through song. But Korex greed outweighed his heroism. Every quest became a potential heist, an opportunity for Korex to steal from his fellow adventurers or the folk who sought their aid. Eventually, Korex's treachery was revealed. His betrayed companions ousted him, reclaimed what stolen wealth remained, and set off without him.

Korex remained in Oakshore with nothing but his pan flute. He quickly earned himself the reputation of a washed-up performer who never repaid his debts. Humiliated and penniless, Korex retreated to Oakshore's sewers, where he found company in his only remaining audience: rats.

In his isolation, Korex has learned how to control the rats, infecting them with defiling magic channeled through his pan flute. Enthralled by Korex's pestilent song, the rats swarm the pier at night, preying on all who spurned Korex.

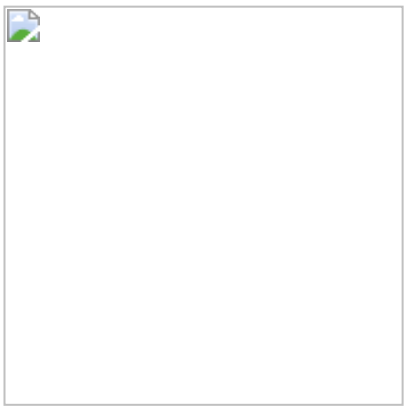
With the captain of the local guard away on official business, her diffident second-in-command turns to the characters for aid, hoping to deputize them as detectives to lead an official investigation.

Beginning the Adventure

When the players are ready to begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following text:

> > *An urgent call for aid has brought you to the quiet port town of Oakshore. When you arrive, the harbor is mostly empty, no doubt due to recent reports of dock workers being slain at night. A stocky dwarf in a guard uniform sits on the curb, groaning and rubbing his temples. He leaps to his feet when he spots you.*
>
> > *"It's about time!" he exclaims. "Captain Skipper is away on business. I didn't know who else to call. Over the past week, three dock workers have been slain in the night. I need you to bring the killer to justice."*

The dwarf is the inept second-in-command of Oakshire's local guard, Fillius Kellaghan (Medium, Neutral Good **Guard**). Fillius has a nonchalant demeanor and a noticeable lack of gusto. While the captain is away, Fillius can hire adventurers as temporary members of the town guard, whose ranks are already spread thin.



Fillius imparts the following information:

- **Curfew**. Fillius has issued a strict curfew. Locals must remain indoors until the case is solved.
- **Dead Workers**. The victims were discovered at the end of their shifts. All their bodies were riddled with tiny holes. Fillius had the bodies burned as a precautionary measure.
- **Trade Stoppage**. Fillius closed the docks, halting trade. Oakshore can't afford the closure for long.

Fillius offers the party 200 GP to gather evidence related to these crimes, plus an additional 100 GP if the characters apprehend or eliminate whoever or whatever is responsible for these grisly acts.

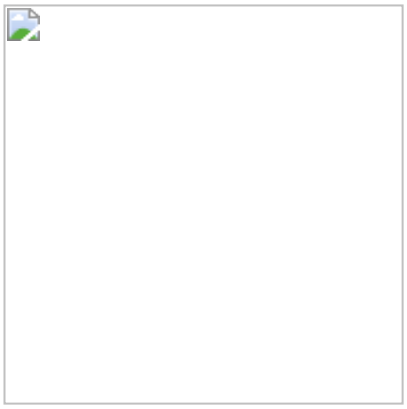
Honorary Investigators

If the characters accept the assignment, Fillius deputizes them as temporary members of the Oakshore Guard in a brief and underwhelming curbside ceremony.

Authority of Oakshore

To aid the characters in their investigation, Fillius provides them with a document that authorizes them to question locals, enter any location along the dockside neighborhood, and, if necessary, use force to protect the townsfolk. Show the Oakshore Writ of Authority to the players when they are deputized.

Fillius also provides the characters one of his two *Speaking Stones* and tells them to contact him with the stone when they're ready to present their findings.



Conducting the Investigation

The characters are free to conduct the investigation however they see fit. Fillius can offer the following suggestions for ways to gather clues:

- **Entering Locations**. The characters have permission to enter any of the dock's locations, although they might have to present the writ of authority to convince an occupant to permit them entry.
- **Looking for Clues**. The characters can search the docks for physical evidence related to the dock workers' deaths.
- **Questioning Witnesses**. The characters can talk to the locals.

Fillius cautions the characters not to act brashly and to keep the peace whenever possible. He trusts them to conduct a thorough investigation rooted in sound evidence, integrity, and even tempers.

At your discretion, Fillius might remain nearby to offer additional information or a second opinion to the party during the adventure. Otherwise, he wishes the characters good luck and departs to fill out reports.

> *Running a mystery can be hard work. No matter where the characters go, they should always find at least one clue. When the characters talk to the locals, you can suggest questions for them to ask, like these:*
>
> - *"What did you see on the nights of the murders?"*
> - *"Aside from the murders, have you noticed anything unusual or suspicious lately?"*
> - *"Who or what do you think is to blame?"*

Oakshore Docks

Normally a bustling hub of business and trade, the Oakshore docks are devoid of activity.

Starting the Investigation

Refer to the Oakshore Docks Map and identify the Suggested Start Area for the Player Characters. Don't reveal the rest of the dock's contents yet, as they aren't initially visible to the characters.

To begin the investigation, read or paraphrase:

> *Oakshore's dockside neighborhood consists of six single-story homes and businesses separated by dingy alleys. Shells in intricate geometrical patterns adorn the facade of each building. Across the cobblestone street, flagstone steps descend to a rickety pier and a gloomy harbor. The neighborhood is eerily still. The only sounds come from the pier, where tides splash against barnacle-laden beams. Where do you want to go first?*

Have the players choose a location shown on the map. The characters can visit locations in any order, and they don't have to visit all of them to complete their investigation.

When the characters have enough information to present their findings to Fillius, proceed to "Ending the Investigation." If you'd like to shorten this adventure, you can have Fillius contact the characters using his *Speaking Stone* after they've explored three or four locations, which should provide them with enough information to make an educated guess about the killer's identity.

Oakshore Docks Features

Unless otherwise specified, the docks have the following features:

- **Ceilings**. Ceilings are 10 feet high inside businesses and residences.
- **Doors**. Doors throughout the docks are made from palm wood planks banded with iron. Unless otherwise noted, doors are unlocked. As a Utilize action, a character can try to pick a locked door using *Thieves' Tools*; a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check opens it. Alternatively, a character can take an action to try to force open a locked door, doing so with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.
- **Rattraps**. Oakshore's residents have scattered rattraps throughout the docks in response to a sudden rodent infestation.

Oakshore Docks	Player Version

Oakshore Docks Locations

The following locations are keyed to map 3. The map also shows you where to place tokens.

01a: Cobbler's Storefront

> *A boot-shaped wooden sign near the entrance of this shop reads "Suresoles Boots Shoes."*

The proprietor of this cobbler's shop is a superstitious dwarf named Nina Suresoles (Medium, Chaotic Good **Commoner**). Her passion for finely crafted footwear is matched only by her interest in ghosts and the afterlife.

When the characters enter, read or paraphrase the following text:

> *The smell of leather fills this warm shop, whose walls are lined with shelves displaying boots and shoes of every size. A young dwarf with thick braids emerges from the back room to greet you. "Customers! Come on in," she says. "I've got boots and shoes for sale; which'll it be?"*

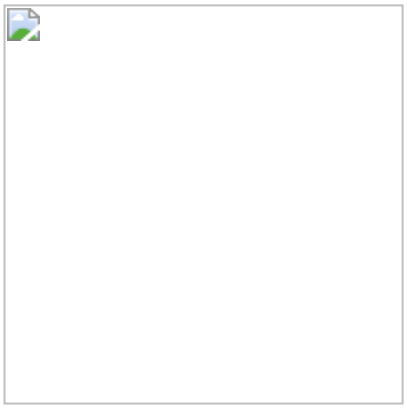
Nina is Friendly toward the characters and welcomes them into her shop regardless of whether they present the writ of authority. She offers to sell the characters boots or shoes for 1 GP per pair.

If the characters question Nina about the murders, her sunny disposition turns solemn. She asks them to follow her into the workshop (area 01b).

01b: Cobbler's Workshop

> *Damaged shoes are piled in the center of this workshop. Cobbler's tools, soles, and leather scraps hang from the walls, and a pristine pair of fancy red boots rests on a workbench.*

- **DM Secret!** Don't reveal the **Swarm of Corrupted Rats** yet. These monsters are hiding.



The pile of damaged shoes is 3 feet tall and Difficult Terrain. Three Swarms of Corrupted Rats hide in the shoe pile. If a character moves within 5 feet of the pile or otherwise disturbs it, the Hostile rats erupt from the pile and begin combat. If Nina is present, she shrieks and takes refuge in the storefront (area 01a); the rats ignore her.

- **Questioning Nina.** Although she speaks in hushed tones, Nina answers all questions honestly and knows the following information:

- **Fancy Boots**. The eye-catching red boots on Nina's workbench in this area were commissioned by an adventurer named Korex as part of a stage outfit. When Korex couldn't pay for the boots, the cobbler kept them. Nina hasn't seen Korex since.

- **Haunted Shoes**. Nina believes the shoes in her workshop are haunted by the murderer's victims. On the night of each incident, Nina saw the shoes move on their own, cryptically adding that "damaged souls move damaged soles."

- **Rats**. Rats are a regular sight at the docks, but they've been acting strange lately. Customers have complained about rats gnawing at their shoes, which is why Nina has a heap awaiting repair.

- **Treasure**. If the characters deal with the rats, Nina gives the characters the boots she made for Korex. The boots are made of red leather encrusted with glitter and are worth 20 GP.

02a: Carpenter's Home

The door to this home is ajar. When the characters approach, read or paraphrase the following text:

> > *A frazzled, grandmotherly gnome peers at you suspiciously from behind the door of this home. An artfully crafted wooden sign above reads "Bibble's Carpentry." The gnome calls out in a shaky voice. "It's not safe out there. Haven't you heard? There's a curfew in place; no one's allowed outside."*

The gnome is a carpenter named Bibble Sunspot (Small **Commoner**). She is Indifferent toward the characters and cautiously addresses them from behind the partially opened door. Bibble quickly shuts and locks the door if the characters try to enter her home without her permission.

A character can try to convince Bibble to let them in and make a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a successful check, Bibble's attitude improves to Friendly, and she welcomes them in. On a failed check, Bibble closes and locks the door. If the characters present their writ of authority, Bibble reluctantly invites them into her home.

When the characters enter, read or paraphrase the following text:

> > *The windows in this cozy home are covered with green curtains that block out natural light. Flickering candles illuminate the wood furniture here, all of which is covered in gnaw marks. Muffled screeches frequently erupt from behind a door on the other side of the room.*

The few candles leave most of this sitting room in Dim Light.

Bibble crafted all the furniture here. Rats have been chewing on the furniture at night, damaging both priceless heirlooms and pieces for sale. The screeching comes from Bibble's workshop (area 02b), where she recently trapped a big rat.

- **Questioning Bibble.** If questioned, Bibble becomes nervous and lies. She claims she didn't see or hear anything. A character who doubts Bibble's claims can make a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check; a successful check reveals that she's lying.

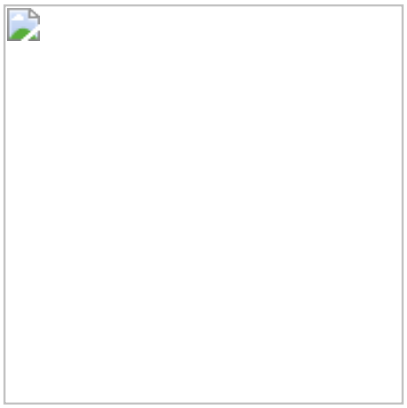
As an Influence action, a character can try to pry more information out of Bibble and make a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If they saw through Bibble's lie, the check succeeds automatically. On a successful check, Bibble reveals what she knows (detailed below). On a failed check, she refuses to speak to them further and asks them to leave.

Bibble knows the following information:

- **Murder Music.** On the nights of the murders, Bibble heard eerie music coming from the docks. Bibble thinks the music came from a flute.
- **Korex.** The only musician Bibble remembers in Oakshore was a washed-up adventurer who wore out his welcome long ago. He used to perform at the local tavern (area 04).
- **Rats.** Bibble has seen some big rats in Oakshore, and they sometimes find their way into her home. Last night, she trapped "a real whopper" in her workshop (area 02b). Bibble offers to pay the characters if they dispose of the rat.

02b: Carpenter's Workshop

The door to this workshop is locked (see "Oakshore Docks Features"). Bibble carries the key and can unlock the door for the characters. When they enter, read or paraphrase the following:



> *The screeching stops as you enter this workshop, which contains carpentry tools and unfinished furniture. In the center of the room, a giant, mangy rat gnaws on a hunk of splintered wood.*

Dim Light fills the workshop. A **Giant Corrupted Rat** has been chewing on in-progress furniture since Bibble trapped it here. The rat is Hostile toward all other creatures.

- **Treasure.** If the characters deal with the rat in the workshop, Bibble rewards each character with 1 GP and a stale butterscotch.

03a: Tailor's Storefront

> *An elegant sign hangs above the door of this humble shop. It reads "Sunderson's Cloaks." Below the sign, a note reads: "Closed until the murders cease—unless you're buying cloaks."*

- **DM Secret!** Although Wexley uses the **Cultist of Demogorgon** stat block, represent him on maps using a Commoner token. If his secret is revealed, swap that token for the Cultist of Demogorgon token.

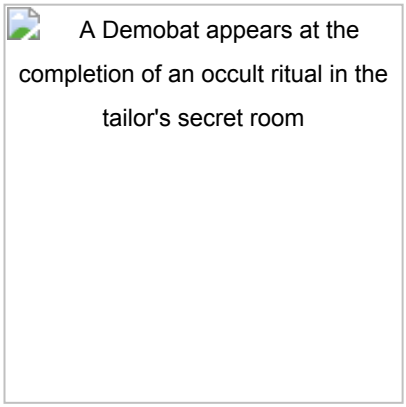
The proprietor of this tailor shop is an arrogant elf named Wexley Sunderson. When he isn't secretly worshiping Demogorgon, Prince of Demons, Wexley designs cloaks for Oakshore's well-to-do citizens.

When the characters enter, read or paraphrase:

> *This sparsely appointed tailor's shop contains a bookcase, textile crates, and cloaks on display. A haughty-looking elf stands amid them, brandishing a large pair of shears. He clears his throat.*

"I assume you can read. So, you're here either to kill me or to buy a cloak. Which is it?"

Wexley (Medium, Chaotic Evil **Commoner (Stranger Things)**) is initially suspicious but Indifferent toward the characters. If the characters reply that they are here to kill him or if they try to enter his secret room (area 03b), Wexley becomes Hostile and starts combat.


A Demobat appears at the completion of an occult ritual in the tailor's secret room

- **Secret Door.** The bookcase is a secret door to area 03b. As a Study action, a character can examine the bookshelf and make a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check; a successful check reveals an occult tome, which, if pulled, opens the secret door.
- **Questioning Wexley.** Wexley answers the characters' questions only if they first buy one of his cloaks, which cost 10 GP each. He doesn't respect the writ of authority and laughs if they present it.

Wexley worries the characters might find his secret room. A character who takes the Search action to observe Wexley and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check sees him glance at the bookcase.

Wexley knows the following information:

- **Rats.** An unusual number of customers have needed their clothes repaired lately. The fabric often looks as if it has been chewed by rodents.
- **Rumors.** The local tavern, Pints Ahoy (area 04), is a good source of juicy gossip.

03b: Tailor's Secret Room

This room is accessed via the bookcase in area 03a. When the characters enter, read the following:

> *A wicked symbol is painted on the floor of this secret room. **Cultists**' robes and other garments hang on racks along one wall.*

As a Study action, a character can inspect the symbol and make a DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check; a successful check reveals it to be a ritual circle that cultists of Demogorgon use to summon demons.

If Wexley dies, three **Demobats** burst from the symbol. The Hostile demons appear in three unoccupied spaces nearest the symbol and begin combat when they detect the characters.

- **Treasure.** A *Cloak of Billowing* hangs on the wall.

04: Tavern

> *This miserable-looking establishment has seen better days. A wooden anchor hangs above the door by a single frayed rope. It reads "Pints Ahoy!" Instrumental music plays within.*

Even in these trying times, the tavern remains open. When the characters enter, read or paraphrase the following text:

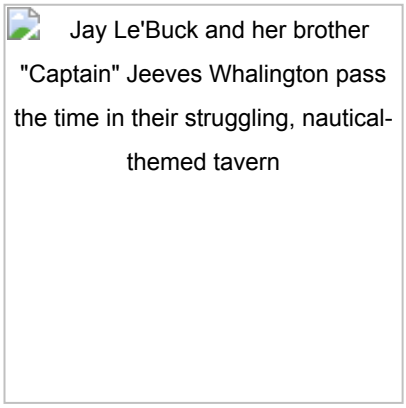
> *A lively sea chantey fills this ramshackle tavern, whose walls are festooned with nautical decor. A lanky human man with a voluminous pompadour prances about the room, playing an accordion. He wears a sailor's uniform, as does the woman sitting tiredly behind the bar. The tavern is otherwise empty.*
>
> *"Ahoy, adventurers!" says the frolicking sailor. "Would you like to set sail on an ocean of ale with me? My name is Captain Jeeves Whalington, and I'll be your seafaring guide on this libationary voyage. This is my first mate, Jay Le'Buck. To what sherry shore shall we set sail to first?"*

Jay and Jeeves greet the characters warmly and are Friendly toward their only customers. If the characters present the writ of authority, Jeeves offers them a free glass of milk or pint of ale (drinker's choice). He insists they call him Captain Whalington.

- **Questioning Jay and Jeeves.** Jeeves welcomes any conversation, including questions about recent events. As the co-owner of the local drinking hole, he knows a little about every dockside resident. Jay chimes in only to correct her brother or deride him with the occasional sarcastic remark.

Jay and Jeeves know the following information:

- **Carpenter**. Bibble Sunspot, the carpenter (see area 02a), has been acting strange lately. She refuses to let anyone into her home anymore.
- **Cobbler**. Nina Suresoles, the cobbler (see areas 01a and 01b), recently crafted a pair of fantastic boots for Korex, a local musician who used to perform at Pints Ahoy.
- **Herbalist**. Lampro Capnos, the herbalist (see area 05), nearly went out of business before the murderers, but they seem to be doing fine now.
- **Musician**. Jeeves hired Korex to perform in the tavern for a time, but he eventually let Korex go due to the musician's bad manners and poor hygiene. Korex used to live just down the street (see area 07), but that house has since been abandoned.
- **Tailor**. Wexley Sunderson, the tailor (see area 03), has some titillating titles on his bookshelf. Jay thinks the tailor has an embarrassing secret.
- **Treasure.** The tavern owners keep 55 GP in an iron lockbox behind the bar. As a Utilize action, a character can try to pick the lock using *Thieves' Tools*; a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check opens it. Jay carries the key to the lockbox, but both siblings become Hostile if they notice a character trying to pilfer their profits.


Jay Le'Buck and her brother "Captain" Jeeves Whalington pass the time in their struggling, nautical-themed tavern

05: Herbalist's Shop

> *The front of this quaint shop is adorned with a bottle-shaped placard that reads "Lampro's Potions." The exterior is overgrown with lush, flowered vines.*

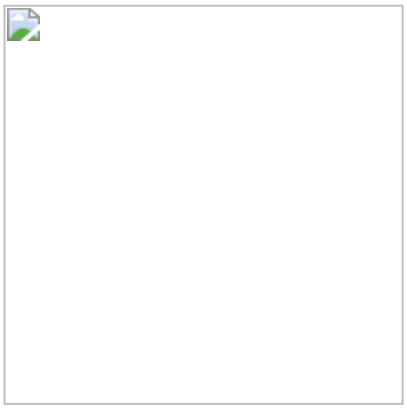
The proprietor of this shop is an elf herbalist named Lampro Capnos. When the characters enter, read or paraphrase the following text:

> > *"Customers! Yes, customers!" a soothing voice calls from inside. As the door opens, a smiling elf in a leather apron beckons you into a junglelike room. An overwhelming odor of strong perfumes mingles with the smell of fresh dirt. A hammock hangs between two potted citrus trees behind a counter brimming with jarred powders, petals, and bulbs.*

Lampro (Medium **Commoner**) is Indifferent toward the characters. After introducing themself, Lampro asks whether the characters have come to purchase plants or potions.

The plants that fill the shop range from fragrant floral arrangements to important alchemical ingredients. A character who inspects Lampro's plants and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes that many of them have medicinal properties.

- **Potions for Sale.** In addition to common house plants and floral arrangements, Lampro sells *Potions of Healing* for 50 GP each. The herbalist has 1d6 vials amid the foliage of a large plant. A character who carefully surveys the shop's interior and succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the potions. Characters who witnessed Lampro retrieve a potion automatically succeed on this check.



- **Questioning Lampro.** Fearing gossip could hurt their struggling business, Lampro answers the party's questions only if a character presents the writ of authority.

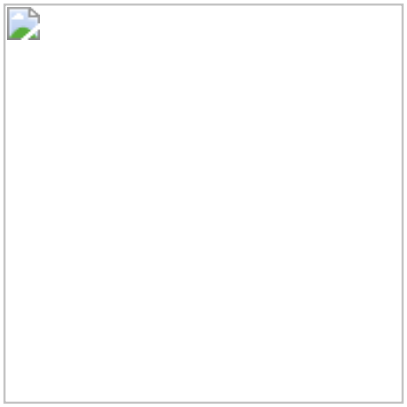
Lampro knows the following information:

- **Bad Business**. Even before the murders started, Oakshore's dockside businesses have struggled. Lampro says the cobbler (see area 01a) was stiffed by a customer who ordered a fancy pair of boots. However, the uptick of crime has resulted in more customers coming to Lampro seeking precautionary *Potions of Healing*. Lampro feels guilty for the boost in sales.

- **Missing Cat**. Lampro's pet cat, Mr. Whiskers, recently escaped the shop, but due to the curfew, Lampro hasn't been able to look for him. Lampro offers the characters a protective potion if they find Mr. Whiskers. The cat has a bright orange coat and likes to hunt rats in the alley (area 06).

- **Musician**. Lampro's old next-door neighbor was a musician and former adventurer. He used to play the most beautiful songs on his pan flute in the evenings, but his house is now abandoned (see areas 07a and 07b). Some nights, Lampro swears they can still hear him playing.

- **Treasure.** After learning Mr. Whiskers's grisly fate (detailed in area 06), the characters can report the bad news to Lampro. Alternatively, a character who fabricates a more pleasant outcome for Mr. Whiskers and succeeds on a DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check convinces Lampro that the story is true. Either way, Lampro rewards the characters as promised with a *Potion of Resistance (Acid)*.



06: Alley

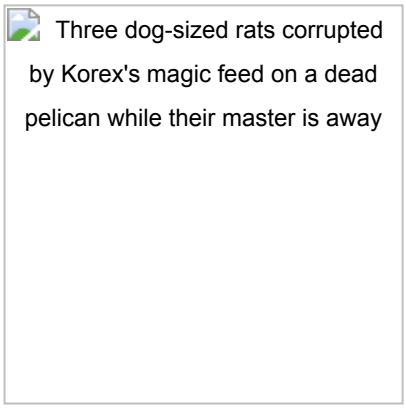
> *The stones of this dreary alley are flecked with blood. Foul drainage trickles down one side of the alleyway into a sewer grate, while lidded trash cans line the opposite wall. A disgusting squelching noise echoes inside one of the bins.*

Inside the largest of the trash cans are two Giant Corrupted Rats feeding on the carcass of Mr. Whiskers, Lampro's missing cat (see area 05). The rats are Hostile toward the characters but are preoccupied with their meal. If a character opens any of the cans or otherwise disturbs the rats, the rats spring from the container and begin combat.

- **Sewer Grate.** The sewer grate leads to a system of sewers and flood channels under Oakshore. At night, Korex emerges from the grate to terrorize the dockside neighborhood.

The sewers and their contents are beyond the scope of this adventure, but you can flesh them out as you see fit if the characters wish to extend their investigation to the tunnels below.

- **Trash Cans.** The trash cans contain food scraps and other dockside refuse. Inside the largest trash can are the remains of Mr. Whiskers. The characters can identify Mr. Whiskers by the name on his collar, which they can bring to Lampro at the herbalist's shop (area 05) as proof of the cat's demise.


Three dog-sized rats corrupted by Korex's magic feed on a dead pelican while their master is away

07a: Abandoned House Living Area

> *This house is in shambles. A torn eviction notice is nailed to the front door, whose once-white paint is now yellowed and peeling. The windows are thick with grime, and a foul odor wafts from within.*

Korex was evicted from this house after running afoul of his creditors and the people of Oakshore. Although the house appears abandoned, Korex has slowly been moving back into his old quarters.

The front door is locked (see "Oakshore Docks Features"). Dirty windows obscure the home's interior.

When the characters enter the house, read or paraphrase the following text:

> *Rat droppings and clumps of mangy fur litter the floor of this sparsely furnished living area, which reeks of sewage. A soiled mattress lies near an old couch, and a battered lute hangs on the wall.*

When Korex isn't serenading sewer rats or stalking the docks for his next victim, he hides here, often joined by his rat thralls. The lute on the wall smells like an outhouse and always sounds out of tune.

The rats in area 07b investigate any loud noises in this area.

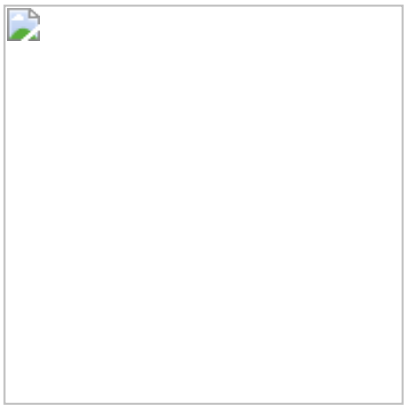
> *If your players are anything like mine, they might be stupid and use the Speaking Stone early. If that happens, just have Fillius show up when you need him to.*
>
> ********.

07b: Abandoned House Bedroom

> *A draft flows into this mostly empty bedroom through a broken window. Inside, three monstrous rats gnaw on the remains of a pelican. The rats snarl and growl as they fight over the scraps. Past the rats, a chest sits near the wall.*

The three **Giant Corrupted Rats** are Hostile toward the characters and fight them on sight.

- **Treasure.** Korex stores his spoils in the chest, which contains 75 GP, a gold bracelet worth 30 GP, a silk handkerchief embroidered with silver thread worth 10 GP, and *Holly's Handy Haversack*.



08: Pier

> *Waves crash against the pillars of this bloodstained pier. A loading crane looms over a single rowboat bobbing on the water.*

The docks rest 5 feet below the street line and are accessible by two flights of stone stairs.

- **Boat.** A single rowboat is moored at the docks. Inside are a metal pail, a fishing rod, and a burlap satchel that contains moldy cheese and stale bread.
- **Crane.** Affixed to the dock is a sturdy crane fitted with a weighted net. As a Utilize action, a creature within 5 feet of the crane can drop the net on a Medium or smaller creature it can see within 20 feet of the crane. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or have the Restrained condition until it escapes.

To escape the net, the target or a creature within 5 feet of it must take an action to make a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, freeing the Restrained creature on a successful check. Destroying the net (AC 10; 5 HP; Immunity to Bludgeoning, Poison, and Psychic damage) also frees the target, ending the effect.

Ending the Investigation

The investigation ends when the characters feel they've collected enough information to report to Fillius, who meets them after they contact him with the *Speaking Stone* he gave them.

If the characters correctly deduce that Korex is behind the murders, Fillius agrees that the evidence supports their conclusion. If the characters don't arrive at this discovery themselves, Fillius can help them make the connection. Regardless, Fillius also recounts that Korex is a former adventurer who was ousted for his thievery (as detailed in this adventure's background).

Rattrap

Korex will try to strike again. To catch the piper in the act, Fillius recommends the characters set a trap. The characters might confront Korex at any of the following locations:

- **Alley**. Korex emerges from the sewers via the grate in the alley (area 06). The characters could hide amid the trash cans and ambush him there.
- **Abandoned House**. If the characters explored Korex's house (areas 07a and 07b), they might decide to wait for him there.
- **Pier**. All the murders happened at the pier (area 08). The characters could use the crane and its net to catch Korex in the act.

Once the characters agree on a plan and make preparations, allow them to take a Short Rest, then proceed to the following section.

The Rat King Returns

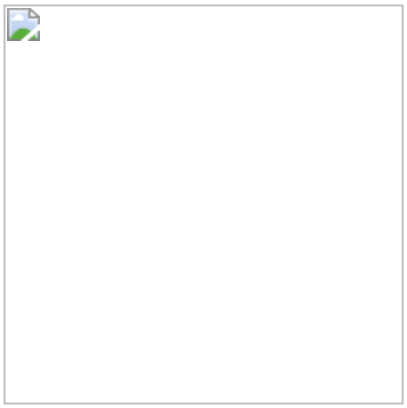
That evening, Korex emerges from the sewer grate in the alley (area 06), followed by two Swarms of Corrupted Rats. Korex and the swarms are Hostile toward all non-rat creatures. Korex and the swarms then roam the pier (area 08) before returning to the abandoned house (areas 07a and 07b), where they remain for the rest of the night before returning to the sewers.

When the characters confront Korex, read or paraphrase the following text:

> > *A wild-eyed elf wearing a tattered cloak dances down the street, playing a haunting melody on a pan flute. A flood of sickly rats trails behind him, skittering to the beat his tune. The music stops.*
> >
> > *"Well, well, well! If it isn't a bunch of goody-goodies come to save the day. Oh well. More food for my rats."*

Korex and the swarms fight to the death.

- **Treasure.** Korex carries the *Pipes of Pestilence*.

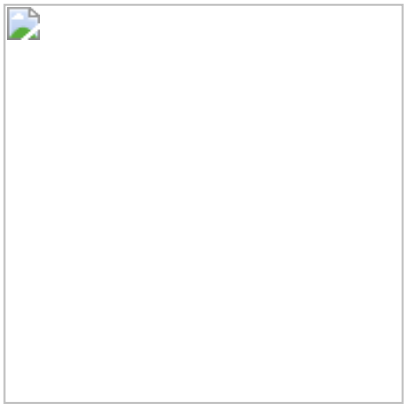


Conclusion

After the characters defeat Korex and his swarms, they can return to Fillius, who commends them on their valiant efforts and keen detective work. Fillius collects the writ of authority and pays the characters 200 GP for the evidence against Korex, as well as an additional 100 GP if they apprehended or dispatched the murderer. As a further token of gratitude, Fillius lets the characters keep both *Speaking Stones* to aid them in future endeavors.

Devil, Metal, Die!

An Adventure for Level 3 Characters

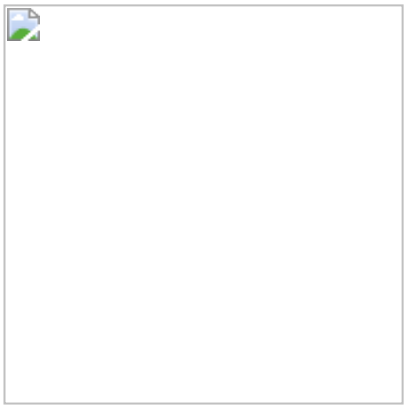


This adventure is designed to fill one or two sessions of play.

If you aren't using the *Map of Greyhawkins*, it can begin in any tavern before descending into the Nine Hells.

Key Plot Points

This information is key to the adventure's story:

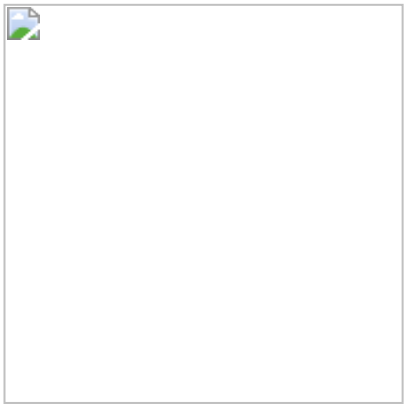


- **Plot Point 1.** Dardew invites the characters to compete in the Hellfire Games. If they accept, they're transported to the Hellfire Dome.
- **Plot Point 2.** In the Hellfire Dome, the characters face off against devils, demons, and a dragon unlike any other.
- **Plot Point 3.** Spectators shower the characters with gold throughout the competition. If a character falls in battle, Dardew intercedes and offers them the chance to rise and fight again as part of an infernal pact.
- **Plot Point 4.** The characters either complete all the challenges or die trying. Any survivors are inducted into the Hellfire Club.

DM Preparation

Before running the adventure, prepare as follows:

- **Step 1.** Read the "Adventure Background" and "Deal with the Devil" sections.
- **Step 2.** Familiarize yourself with the Infernal Contract Handout and the Hellfire Dome map.



- **Step 3.** Familiarize yourself with the creatures in this adventure, which are as follows:
- 1 **Barbed Devil**
- 1 **Bearded Devil**
- 5 **Cultists of Demogorgon**
- **Dardew**
- 5 **Demobats**

- 1 **Demodragon**
- 1 **Demogorgon Spawn**
- 6 **Dretches**
- 3 **Gnoll Warriors**
- 2 **Hell Hounds**
- 1 **Imp Trickster**
- 1 **Medusa**
- **Step 4.** Familiarize yourself with the Magic Items in this adventure, which are as follows:
- *Adamantine Armor (Breastplate)*
- *Potion of Healing*
- *Spiked Shield*

> *This is it: the final trial to see who's worthy of joining Hellfire! This deadly gauntlet separates the wheat from the chaff, real heroes from would-be plunderers. Make sure everyone can make it to game night. If they skip this one, they're OUT. Lure them with the promise of epic adventure, priceless treasures, and CERTAIN DEATH.*
>
> *Oh, and snacks. Bring those, too.*

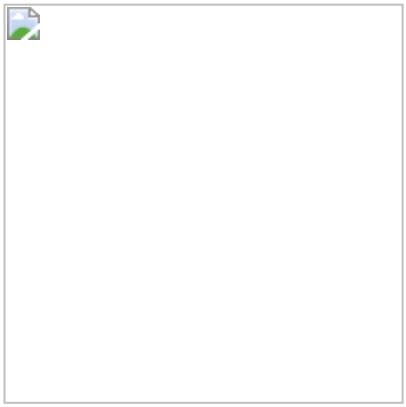
Player Assistance

You can simplify the DM's role by having the a player handle tasks typically assigned to the DM. Before play begins, see if a player would like to be the **Rules Consultant**. That player references the *D&D Beyond Basic Rules* as needed.

- **Monster Wranglers.** Whenever the characters encounter Hostile monsters, one or two players can run those monsters using the referenced stat blocks. (If you have two players doing this, they can take turns.)
- **Rules Consultant.** One player references the *D&D Beyond Basic Rules* as needed.

Adventure Background

From the fires of the Nine Hells rises the infamous Hellfire Dome, a diabolical arena where contestants of ill repute vie for gold and glory. Death, betrayal, and priceless treasures await those who endure the lethal games in the dome, which are spectated by an audience of disorderly fiends.



Contestants must rely on strength and wits to overcome the diabolical gauntlet that awaits them in the dome. The last and greatest of these trials is a showdown with the **Demodragon**: a wretched, two-headed terror created by Demogorgon, the Prince of Demons. Those who slay the Demodragon depart the Nine Hells as wealthy champions.

Winners are also inducted into the Hellfire Club, an exclusive association of infernal origin respected by devils of every rank. Members of the Hellfire Club have a reputation for being tough, fearless, and above all—totally metal.

Every six years, the Hellfire Dome opens its doors to non-Fiends, allowing them to compete in a series of infernal challenges. Dardew the Banished, a cambion with aspirations of grandeur, invites the characters to compete in the arena. If victorious, the characters will be crowned members of the legendary Hellfire Club, and **Dardew** will rise in the fiery ranks. However, if the characters lose, they might forfeit their souls.

Dardew the Banished

This year's master of ceremonies for the Hellfire Games is a music-loving fiend named Dardew the Banished. A lowly cambion, Dardew hopes to ascend the ranks of the Nine Hells through panache and showmanship, impressing powerful devils in the audience with an unforgettable performance. He believes the characters are his ticket to fame.

Deal with the Devil

Few survive the Hellfire Dome in one piece, but those who make deals with devils have a better chance at making it out alive. Early deaths among contestants can make for an underwhelming display, and Dardew can't afford for this year's Hellfire Games to disappoint.

To give the characters an edge in the arena, Dardew has arranged a special contract to keep them fighting beyond the brink of death. Still, no fiend can resist corrupting a mortal soul, especially one that belongs to a good-hearted adventurer. The characters would be wise to consider the contract's fine print before they sign.

> *Souls for sale! Death is a part of the game, but it doesn't have to be the end. And in this adventure, it can be fun for everyone involved! Celebrate players who push their luck and amplify this great, bloody, gladiatorial spectacle. You can always give them their characters' souls back later ... if you're a pushover.*

Infernal Contract

Whenever a character drops to 0 Hit Points in the Hellfire Dome, Dardew extends an infernal contract to that character. This event takes place outside the Initiative order, which resumes after the character accepts or declines Dardew's offer.

Read or paraphrase the following text:

> > *The scene around you freezes as Dardew appears and unfurls a lengthy contract. "I've got a good feeling about you. How would you like to keep going?"*

Show that player the Infernal Contract Handout and ask them if their character agrees to the following terms:

- **Defying Death.** When you drop to 0 Hit Points while in the Hellfire Dome—including when you are first offered this contract—you can roll any number of d6s (minimum of 3d6) and regain a number of Hit Points equal to the roll's total (no action required). If you roll a 6 on three or more of these dice, you also forfeit your soul and can't benefit from the contract in this way again.
- **Forfeiting Your Soul.** If you forfeit your soul, it becomes the property of Dardew the Banished on your death.
- **Voiding the Contract.** As a Magic action, Dardew or an archdevil can void this contract, returning any forfeited souls to their previous owners. Destroying the contract or its arbiter doesn't void the agreement.

If the character accepts these terms, they sign the contract. Dardew then collects the contract and vanishes in a cloud of brimstone. Dardew reappears to offer the same contract to any character who drops to 0 Hit Points while in the Hellfire Dome, even if the character previously rejected the contract.

> ***This is Hellfire.***
>
> *If the characters reject Dardew, your players are either scaredy cats or a bunch of *****. Either way, put on your favorite mix and wait 'em out. They'll come to their senses eventually.*
>
> *It's D&D or bust.*

Beginning the Adventure

When the players are ready to begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following text:

> *You sit in an unremarkable tavern somewhere in Greyhawkins when, in a burst of brimstone, a winged, red-skinned fiend with a mane of curly hair and a boyish smile appears. He lands atop one of the tables with an exaggerated bow.*
>
> *"Greetings, mortal adventurers. My name is Dardew. I hope I'm not interrupting your meal," he says coyly.*
>
> *"I've come to invite you to compete in the Hellfire Games. I've been watching you for some time now, and I believe you just might have what it takes to join the esteemed Hellfire Club. Care to play the devils' game?"*

Dardew has come to recruit the characters for the Hellfire Games. He is Indifferent toward the party—but still charming—and shares the following information about the competition:

- **Hellfire Games.** The Hellfire Games are a sexennial competition in which contestants battle for prestige, treasure, and induction into the exclusive Hellfire Club.
- **Hellfire Club.** The Hellfire Club is an invite-only club whose members include epic heroes, high-ranking devils, and figures of legend.

Hellfire Dome. The games are held in the Hellfire Dome, an arena far from Greyhawkins; Dardew is this year's host and can take the characters there.

If the characters ask about the risk, Dardew explains that while the Hellfire Games are dangerous, the characters have nothing to worry about. He has prepared a special contract to help the characters cheat death (see "Deal with the Devil"), though he doesn't delve into specifics.

Accepting the Invitation

If the characters accept Dardew's invitation, he magically transports them to the Hellfire Dome. Read or paraphrase the following text:

> *"That's the spirit!" Dardew laughs and claps his hands, and a cloud of red smoke engulfs you.*

The characters begin the games in area H1 of the Hellfire Dome.

Declining the Invitation

If the characters decline, read or paraphrase:

> *"Hmm, not what I expected. Oh, well! Maybe next time." Dardew shrugs and disappears with a puff of smoke.*

At your discretion, Dardew might return later to reissue his invitation, perhaps offering an important insight or piece of information in return for the characters' participation.

Hellfire Dome

Devils prize competition, treachery, and power, so they created the Hellfire Dome, a gauntlet of deadly scenarios designed to feature all three. These challenges take place in a volcanic pit on Avernus, the first layer of the Nine Hells. Just outside the arid dome lies an endless wasteland razed in the Blood War, an eternal conflict between devils and demons.

The Hellfire Dome is a multistory arena hewn from obsidian. A massive dome forged from infernal steel covers the arena, shielding it from meteors that fall from Avernus's skies. Beneath the dome, an infernal steel cage prevents contestants from escaping.

Thousands of devils gather to watch the Hellfire Games. These rowdy onlookers sometimes cast coins into the pit, showering contenders with gold. Unpopular contestants occasionally receive a ball of flame hurled by a disgruntled fiend.

Refer to the Hellfire Dome map and note that the players begin in the center of area H1. Don't reveal the rest of the map's contents yet, as it is not not initially visible to the characters.

Hellfire Dome Features

The Hellfire Dome has the following features:

- **Ambiance.** The arena is dry and oppressively hot, and it reeks of blood and brimstone. The audience roars with cheers and howls.
- **Ceilings.** Aside from the dome over the arena, the Hellfire Dome has no ceilings. An indestructible cage 60 feet above the pit separates contestants from the audience.
- **Lighting.** Unless otherwise specified, areas in the dome are in Bright Light.
- **Portals.** Each of the lettered portals on Hellfire Dome map is a gateway of harmless fire linked to another area in the arena. A creature that enters a portal emerges within 5 feet of the portal with the matching letter on Hellfire Dome map or in the nearest unoccupied space.

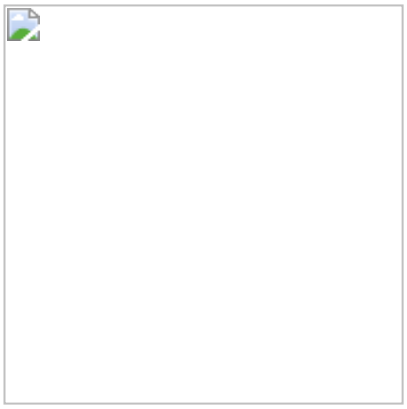
Dungeon Locations

The following locations are keyed to the Hellfire Dome map. The map also shows the locations of characters and monsters in the tunnels.

H1: Hellfire Arena

> *As the smoke clears, you find yourself in a pit within a hellish arena. The temperature is oppressively hot, and the air stinks of sulfur. Thousands of devils leer down at you from rows of seating above a twisted cage of infernal steel. Diabolical music fills the arena.*
>
> *You stand on a raised platform inscribed with a pentagram. Red flames burn in five braziers, one at each of the star's points.*
>
> *Dardew flies over the pit. His voice booms out, quieting the din. "Welcome, one and all, to the Hellfire Dome! Prepare yourselves for a night of death, betrayal, and vile spectacle." The audience erupts in thunderous applause.*
>
> *"I present to you our latest contenders: group five hundred twenty-seven! Will they survive to become the Hellfire Club's newest initiates? Only time will tell, but we wish them luck. Let the Hellfire Games begin!"*
>
> *Suddenly, five eyeless, flying demons burst from the fiery braziers.*

The five **Demobats** fight to the death. Whenever the characters vanquish a Demobat, the audience rewards them (see "Treasure" below). Once the characters defeat the bats, five blazing portals appear along the arena's walls.



Dardew then floats down and congratulates the characters on completing their first challenge. He informs them that only after they have completed at least two more challenges can they proceed through the east portal to their final test (area H7). Dardew doesn't reveal what lies beyond any of the portals.

- **Portals.** Five portals in the arena lead to the following locations:

Portal A. Portal A leads to area H4.

Portal B. Portal B leads to area H3.

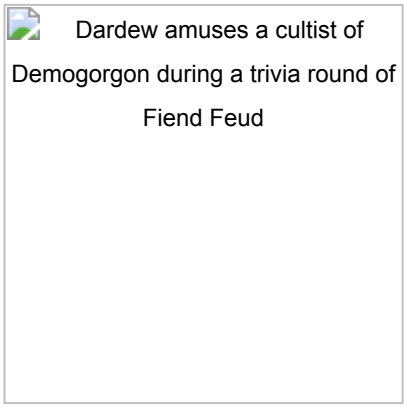
Portal C. Portal C leads to area H7. The portal doesn't function until the characters have completed challenges in at least two other areas.

Portal D. Portal D leads to area H5.

Portal E. Portal E leads to area H2.

Each portal initially functions as a one-way door, preventing reentry until the characters have completed the challenge in the destination area.

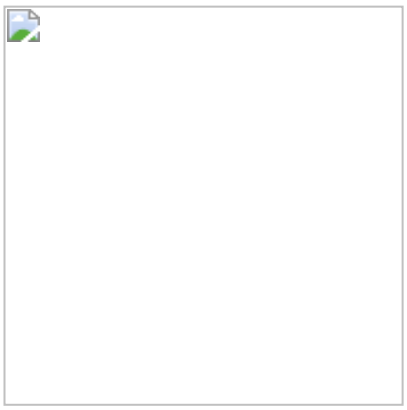
Treasure. Each time a character kills a Demobat, the audience throws 50 GP into this area.



H2: Fiend Feud

> *Dardew hovers impatiently over this room, which features two rusty, wrought-iron podiums that resemble corroded coffins. Five masked cultists stand behind one of the podiums, while the other is vacant.*
>
> *"It's that time again!" Dardew announces to the devils above. "Are you ready for another game of Fiend Feud?" The audience cheers. "Contestants, take your places." Dardew clears his throat and gestures to the empty podium.*

This challenge is called Fiend Feud, a trivia game of brains and bloodshed where two teams compete for fame, fortune—and their lives. The opposing team consists of five **Cultists of Demogorgon** who are Hostile toward the characters. Dardew acts as host.



Once the characters take their places behind the podium, the game begins.

- **Playing Fiend Feud.** Fiend Feud is a trivia game with three rounds and a mostly arbitrary points system. The game's rules are as follows:
- **Trivia Questions.** Each round, Dardew asks the characters one question from the Fiend Feud Questions table, rerolling duplicates. These questions test player knowledge as much as character knowledge. The player characters are allowed to briefly deliberate before giving their response. If they answer the question correctly, their team receives 1 point.
- **Chance to Steal.** If the characters answer a question incorrectly, the opposing team has a chance answer the question, receiving 1 point if they answer it correctly. The cultists are well-versed in occult lore and answer any such questions correctly, but they know little about anything else and get those questions wrong. The cultists know the answers to questions 1, 4, and 6 in the Fiend Feud Questions table.
- **Bonus Round.** After three rounds of trivia, both teams can earn bonus points by killing members of the opposing team. Have everyone roll Initiative. For each opposing team member they slay, a team earns 1 point.

The game ends when only one team remains.

> *If you really want to run a certain encounter, you can just have whichever portal the characters go through lead to that area. It's an old DM trick I like to call "the invisible railroad."*

Fiend Feud Questions

1d6	Question	Answer
1	What vile lich is missing one eye and one hand?	Vecna
2	What creatures love brains but loathe zombies?	Mind flayers
3	Which vampire lord rules over the land of Barovia?	Count Strahd von Zarovich
4	Which demon lord is the self-styled Prince of Demons?	Demogorgon
5	Which warrior severed the hand of a famous lich?	Kas
6	Which archdevil rules over all the Nine Hells?	Asmodeus

At the DM's discretion, a character can take the Study action to make a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check to know the answer to a question, learning the correct answer on a successful check.

Treasure. Characters receive treasure as follows:

- **Correct Answers.** Whenever a character correctly answers a question, the audience throws 10 GP into this area.
- **Slaying Cultists.** Whenever a character slays a cultist, the audience throws 25 GP into this area.
- **Winning the Game.** If the characters win Fiend Feud, the audience showers them with 150 GP.

H3: Demonic Incursion

> *This fetid chamber holds a bubbling well of brownish sludge. In front of the well, a devil stands poised for battle. Glaive in hand, the devil sports a writhing beard of barbed, snakelike appendages.*
>
> *"Fight well alongside me, maggots," it spits, "Or I'll stick you like the smelly flesh bags you are!" Just then, the well burps up six squealing demons, each more hideous than the last.*
>
> *An unseen creature whispers in your ear. "Kill the demons, then kill this devil—make it look like an accident, and you'll be rewarded. You have my word!"*

- **DM Secret!** Don't reveal the Imp Trickster yet. This monster is invisible.

Six **Dretches** erupt from the well. The Hostile demons fight the characters and the **Bearded Devil**, which is initially Indifferent toward the party and fights alongside them. Once all six dretches have been slain, the challenge is complete, and the portal to area H1 reopens.

A treacherous **Imp Trickster** with the Invisible condition watches the battle unfold. The imp loathes the bearded devil and wishes it dead but is Indifferent toward the characters. During the battle, the imp encourages characters to turn on the bearded devil when the last dretch falls.

The Devil You Don't Know. The bearded devil is an overbearing grunt who barks orders at the characters and scolds any who defy its commands. Whenever a character slays a demon, the bearded devil loudly takes credit for the kill.

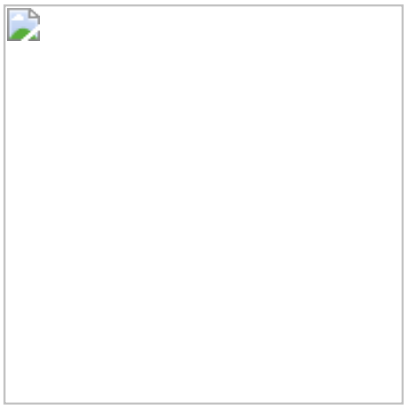
Treasure. Characters receive treasure as follows:

- **Defeating the Bearded Devil**. If a character kills the bearded devil, the imp turns visible and gives them 200 GP.
- **Defeating Dretches**. Each time a character kills a dretch, the audience throws 50 GP into this area.
- **Defeating the Imp**. If a character kills the Imp Trickster, the bearded devil thanks the characters for eliminating "the spy" and gives them 10 GP.

H4: Sanctuary of Yeenoghu

> *Three mangy, hyenoid fiends conduct a ritual in this wicked sanctuary. In the center of the chamber, a giant, wicked-looking flail spins and stops at unpredictable intervals, violently swinging its three spiked heads.*
>
> *Two of the creatures cackle maliciously as the third—completely hairless—chants, "Yeenoghu! Deliver us from this wretched game so we may spill blood in your name!"*

Three **Gnoll Warriors** beseech the demon lord Yeenoghu for aid in this sanctuary. They are Hostile toward all other creatures and rush them on sight.



These are the same gnolls from the Dungeon of Shadows (see "The Vanishing Gnome"). They have since died and made their way to the Hellfire Dome. If the characters fought them previously, the gnolls recognize them and greet them accordingly:

> > *The gnolls visibly seethe with hatred. "You again?!" shouts the hairless gnoll. "Heretics! How dare you come here and interrupt our ritual a second time!"*

The gnolls fight to the death (again).

Flail. The spinning flail is embedded in the ground between the gnolls. Each round on Initiative count 10 (losing Initiative ties), the flail's three heads crash to the ground. Each creature within 10 feet of the flail must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d6 Bludgeoning damage and have the Prone condition. The flail doesn't harm the gnolls.

The flail has AC 18, HP 40, and Immunity to Poison and Psychic damage. If the flail is destroyed, it stops spinning, and the audience roars in jubilation.

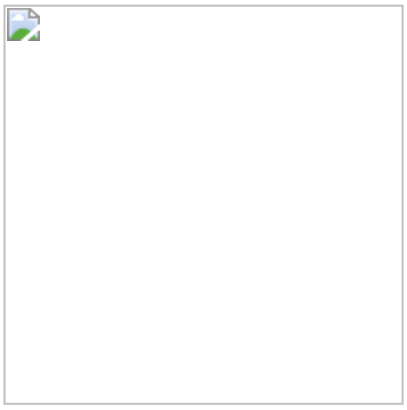
Treasure. Characters receive treasure as follows:

- **Defeating Gnolls.** Each time a character kills a gnoll, the audience throws 100 GP into this area.
- **Destroying the Flail.** If a character destroys the flail, the audience throws 200 GP into this area.

H5: Infernal Court

> *A judge with a nest of snakes for hair and wearing crimson robes presides over this infernal court. Two short podiums rest before the judge's bench, an imposing monument of black marble flanked by two snarling hounds; flames drip from the hounds' jaws. A lone imp perches atop one of the podiums. It snickers as you enter.*
>
> *Nine petrified jurors with frightened expressions fill a juror's box to the north. The judge calls the court to order. "Order in the court!" the judge demands. "The accused have finally decided to join us—late and without representation. How do you plead?"*

The judge is Yudith Duboix, a no-nonsense **Medusa**. Judge Deboix is Hostile toward the characters, who have just entered their own trial. Two **Hell Hounds** ferociously obey the judge's commands.



The trial proceeds through arraignment, statements, and sentencing, as detailed in the following sections. The characters can either represent themselves or allow the **Imp Trickster**, an unlicensed attorney, to provide them with bad-faith representation.

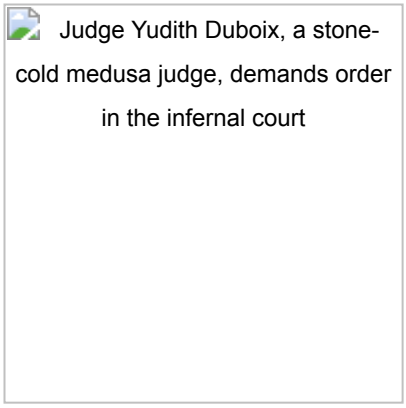
The jury is composed of adventurers petrified by Judge Deboix. If the characters try to fight the court instead, they might be similarly turned to stone, in which case Dardew can amend his contract (see "Infernal Contract" earlier in this adventure) to also remove the Petrified condition.

- **Arraignment.** After the characters' plea, Judge Duboix summarizes the charges against them, which might include but aren't limited to the following:
- **Arson.** A character is charged with arson if they've ever set anything on fire, including torches.
- **Failure to Appear.** A character is charged with failure to appear if their player has ever arrived late to a game session.
- **Murder.** A character is charged with murder if they've ever slain a creature in combat.
- **Thievery.** A character is charged with thievery if they've ever stolen property, including gold or items found in a dungeon or taken from the dead.
- **Trespassing.** A character is charged with trespassing if they've ever entered a location, including a dungeon, without permission.

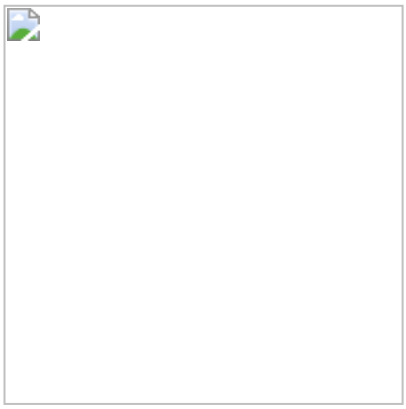
At your discretion, other offenses might be worthy of a charge in this kangaroo court.

Statements. The characters can confer and give a statement in their defense. A character can try to convince Judge Duboix of the party's innocence and make a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a successful check, Judge Duboix finds the party not guilty and dismisses the characters from the court. On a failed check (or if the characters chose to let the imp represent them), Judge Duboix rules against the party and moves to sentencing.

If the party is found not guilty, the challenge is considered complete, and the portal to area H1 reopens.


Judge Yudith Duboix, a stone-cold medusa judge, demands order in the infernal court

Sentencing. Judge Duboix's sentencing is harsh and swift. If the party is found guilty, the medusa sentences the characters to 1,000 years in prison. The judge then orders the hell hounds to escort the characters to the infernal prison (area H6) for detainment. If the characters refuse, the hell hounds leap into battle. Judge Duboix defends itself as necessary but otherwise abstains from combat. If both hounds are slain, Judge Duboix surrenders and overturns the previous verdict.



If the characters comply with sentencing and later return to this area, the courtroom is empty, and the portal to area H1 reopens.

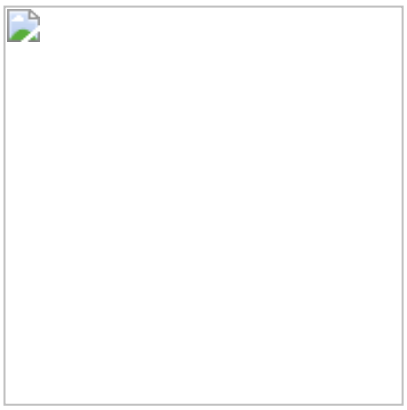
Treasure. Characters receive treasure as follows:

- **Defeating Hell Hounds.** Each time a character kills a hound, the audience throws 200 GP into this area.
- **Defeating Judge Duboix.** If Judge Duboix dies, the audience throws 2,000 GP into this area.
- **Innocent Verdict.** If the party is found innocent, the audience throws 100 GP into this area.

H6: Infernal Prison

> > *A devil covered in sharp barbs patrols this open-air cell block. The devil rattles its tail against the bars of the six cages, laughing cruelly at the prisoners. A key hangs around the devil's neck.*

The warden of this prison is a masochistic **Barbed Devil** named Khaos, the Bringer of Pain. Khaos is Hostile toward the characters. When they enter, the devil grunts and points them to the biggest cage (cage 1), attacking any who refuse to enter. Khaos then returns to marching up and down the block.

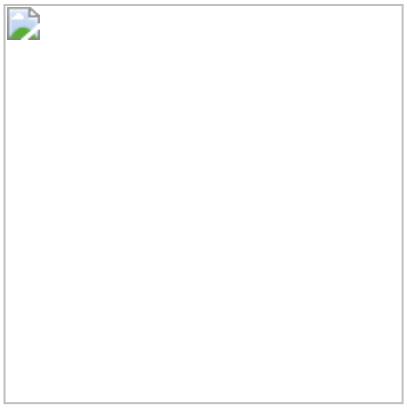


Khaos enjoys catching escaped prisoners and breaking their spirits and bodies. The devil doesn't confiscate inmates' equipment and pretends not to notice if they try to free themselves or one another. Khaos doesn't pursue runaways beyond this area.

Cages. Khaos wears the key to these six locked cages. As a Utilize action, a character can try to pick a cage's lock using *Thieves' Tools*, doing so with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. The check is made with Disadvantage if the character is trying to pick the lock from inside the cage.

Alternatively, a character can try to goad Khaos into unlocking their cage. As an Influence action, a character can taunt the barbed devil and make a DC 13 Charisma (Performance) check. On a successful check, Khaos unlocks the door, enters the cage, and strikes that character to teach them a lesson.

The cage's contents are as follows:



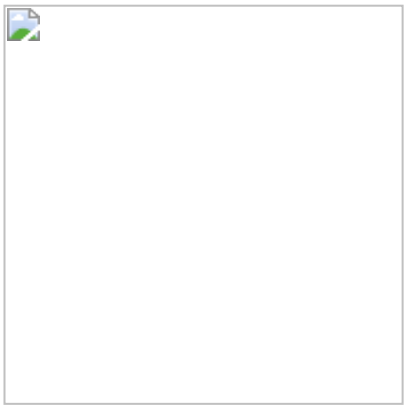
- **Cage 1** contains only a bench chained to the wall.

- **Cage 2** contains a **Demogorgon Spawn** captured on the battlefields of Avernus. The spawn is Hostile toward all other creatures and tries to tear them limb from limb if freed from its cell.
- **Cage 3** is empty.
- **Cage 4** contains a human **Cultist of Demogorgon** who warns any who address her that the "Sibilant Beast" will consume them all. The Hostile cultist fights any who enter her cell.
- **Cage 5** contains an **Imp Trickster** playing a harmonica. The imp is Indifferent toward the characters but aids them in combat in this area if freed.
- **Cage 6** is empty.

If a character escapes their cage or frees one of the other imprisoned creatures, Khaos brays with malevolent laughter and fights the escapee.

Treasure. Characters receive treasure as follows:

- **Defeating Khaos.** If a character kills Khaos, the audience throws 2,000 GP into this area.
- **Defeating the Demogorgon Spawn.** If a character kills the **Demogorgon Spawn**, the audience throws 150 GP into this area.

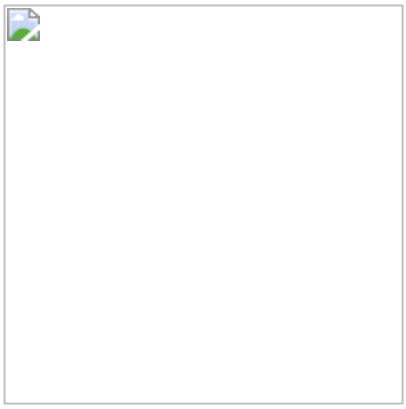


H7: Demodragon Lair

Dardew has tilted the odds in the characters' favor. When they enter this area, each character magically gains the benefits of finishing a Short Rest. Then, read or paraphrase the following text:

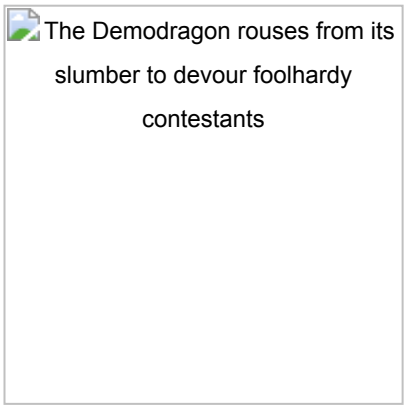
> *A river of molten lava flows through this scorched lair. Crumbling rubble, dried viscera, and cracked bones litter the ground, a barren landscape marred by past battles.*
>
> *The earth trembles as a massive abomination with a sickly gray hide, razor-sharp claws, and two faceless heads rises from a mound of glittering treasure. It stretches its wide, leathery wings and unfurls its heads to reveal two gaping maws of toothed, fleshy petals. The behemoth bellows two bone-chilling roars.*
>
> *Roll initiative!*

The final challenge in the Hellfire Games is the **Demodragon**, an abomination that has slaughtered scores of contestants. The Demodragon is Hostile toward the characters and fights to the death.



- **Lava.** Rivers of lava flow throughout this area, as shown on the map. A creature that enters the lava for the first time on a turn or starts its turn in the lava takes 6d10 fire damage.

Treasure. The Demodragon's hoard contains the following: an *Adamantine Armor (Breastplate)*, a *Spiked Shield*, a *Potion of Healing*, and 2,420 GP.


The Demodragon rouses from its slumber to devour foolhardy contestants

Conclusion

The Hellfire Games conclude when the characters vanquish the Demodragon or die trying. If the characters defeat the Demodragon, read or paraphrase the following text:

> *With an earthshaking crash, the Demodragon collapses dead before you. The crowd goes wild.*
>
> *Dardew soars overhead. "Wow! What a show!" he crows. "Friends and fiends, please join me in welcoming our latest Hellfire champions!"*
>
> *He flies toward you and says quietly, "Adventurers, now would be a great time to take a bow. You've earned it."*

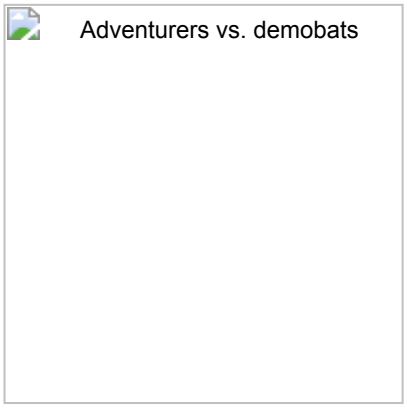
In addition to the treasure they collected in the Hellfire Dome, the characters earn the following rewards for winning the Hellfire Games:

- **Hellfire Club Membership.** Dardew invites characters to join the Hellfire Club. If they accept his invitation, they each receive a pendant worth 50 GP. The pendant depicts the face of a red devil flanked by a flail and flaming sword.
- **Hellfire Hall of Fame.** The characters are inducted into the Hellfire Hall of Fame. Their names are recorded forever in the annals of infernal history alongside other legendary heroes and villains.
- **Voiding the Infernal Contract.** If any character entered into an infernal contract with Dardew (see "Infernal Contract" earlier in this adventure), Dardew voids the contract.

When the characters are ready to leave the Nine Hells, Dardew magically returns them to Greyhawkins. Before he departs, Dardew thanks them for the magnificent performance.

> *Congratulations.*
>
> *Hellfire is officially in your hands.*
>
> *You should take a bow, too. Being a DM can feel overwhelming sometimes, but know this: You're not alone. I promise. If you ever need a pep talk, I'm just a phone call away. Save me a seat at your table. I'll be back to see what you've done with the place.*

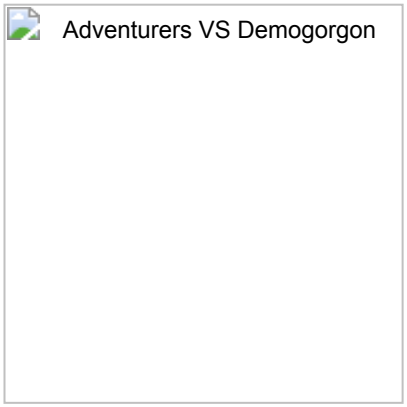
Appendix A - Magic Items



- *Adamantine Breastplate*
- *Cap of Vanishing*
- *Cloak of Billowing*
- *+1 Dart*
- *Dread Helm*
- *+1 Flail*
- *Flame Tongue Greatsword*

- *Holly's Handy Haversack*
- *Periapt of Health*
- *Pipes of Pestilence*
- *Poison Soaked Kukri*
- *Potion of Healing*
- *Potion of Acid Resistance*
- *Speaking Stones*
- *Spiked Shield*
- *Wand of Secrets*

Appendix B - Monsters & NPCs



- **Ankheg**
- **Barbed Devil**
- **Bearded Devil**
- **Cultist of Demogorgon**
- **Commoner**
- **Corrupted Rat**
- **Dardew**
- **Demobat**
- **Demodog**
- **Demodragon**
- **Demogorgon Spawn**
- **Dretch**
- **Flizzlebin**
- **Giant Corrupted Rat**
- **Giant Spider**
- **Gnoll Warrior**
- **Goblin Warrior**

- **Guard**
- **Hell Hound**
- **Imp Trickster**
- **Korex**
- **Medusa**
- **Myconid Adult**
- **Needle Blight**
- **Rilly June**
- **Scarecrow**
- **Shadow**
- **Shrieker Fungus**
- **Swarm of Corrupted Rats**
- **Vine Blight Tangler**
- **Violet Fungus**

Ankheg
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Barbed Devil
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Bearded Devil
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Cultist of Demogorgon
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Commoner
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Corrupted Rat
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Dardew
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Demobat
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Demodog
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Demodragon
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Demogorgon Spawn
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Giant Corrupted Rat
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Hell Hound
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Shrieker Fungus
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Swarm of Corrupted Rats
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Violet Fungus
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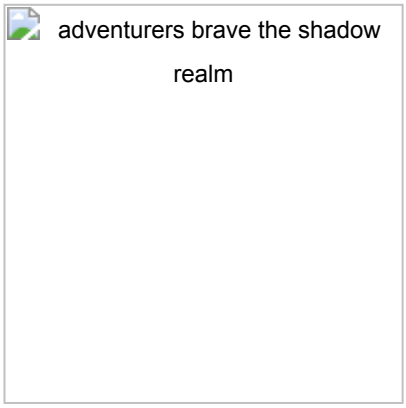
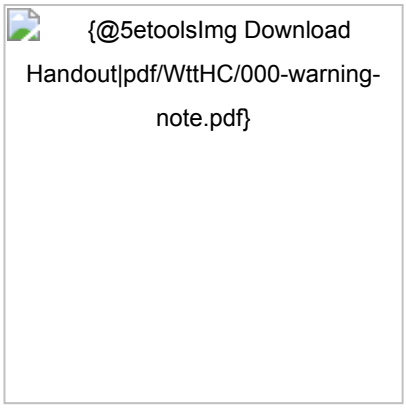
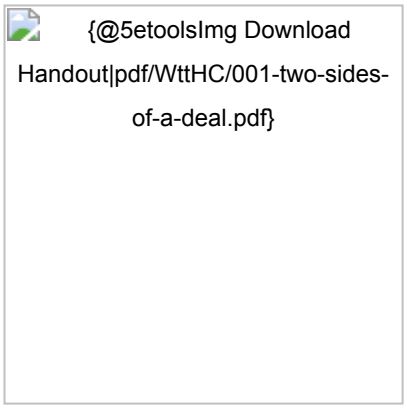
Appendix C - Handouts



Evil Dwells Here Note



From the Abyss



The Contract

Missing Poster

Writ of Authorization

Appendix D - Pre-Generated Characters

Dungeons & Dragons is a cooperative game in which players create exciting fantasy stories guided by a Dungeon Master, or DM.

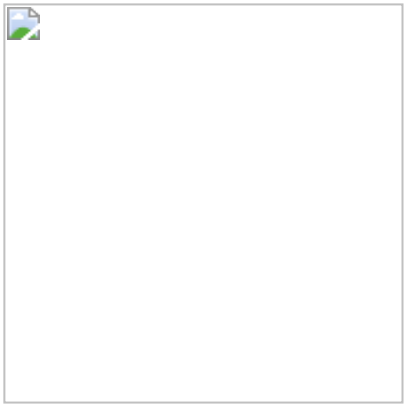
Imagination and chance determine the fate of the players' characters.

Playing a Character. *Choose a character. Team up. Venture forth.*

Being the Dungeon Master. *Run the Adventure. Guide the story. Adjudicate the rules.*

A Note From Eddie. *Allow me to let you in on a little secret: nobody knows all the rules by heart. I sure as hell don't. That's what these guides are for. The rules are there to help everyone at the table tell a story. If you ever feel like the rules are getting in the way of that, remember the most important rule of all: have fun.*

At the end of the day, that's all that matters.



Sundar the Bold

Human Fighter

A gallant and unyielding warrior, Sundar the Bold bravely defends his companions—just like this Fighter's player, Lucas Sinclair.

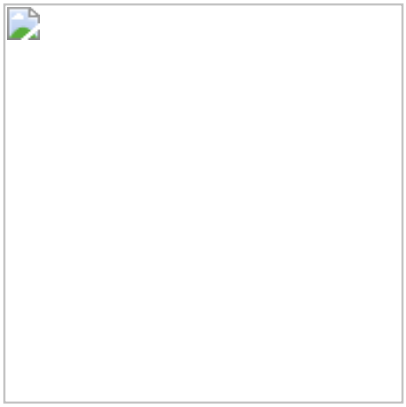
[https://www.dndbeyond.com/characters/153408508](D&D Beyond Character)

Downloadable PDFs>

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3

Character Advancement>

- Level 2: Automatically gain Action Surge
- Level 3: Choose the Champion subclass



Will the Wise

Human Wizard

Will Byer's Wizard is a mainstay of the party and is always up for another adventure. When Will the Wise casts a spell, his magic sometimes manifests in unexpected colors.

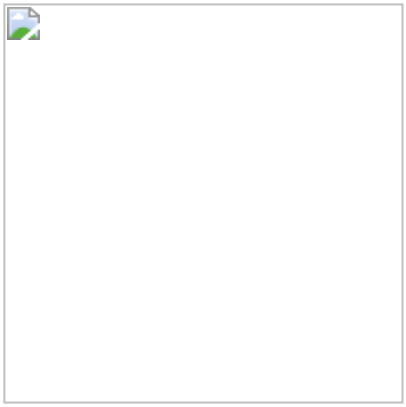
[https://www.dndbeyond.com/characters/153409493](D&D Beyond Character)

Downloadable PDFs>

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3

Character Advancement>

- Level 2: Choose a Skill for Expertise
- Level 3: Choose the Evoker subclass



Lady Applejack

Elf Rogue

Played by Erica Sinclair, Lady Applejack is a Chaotic Good, Elf Rogue who will sneak behind any monster, stab them in the back with her kukri, and smile as she watches them die a slow, agonizing death.

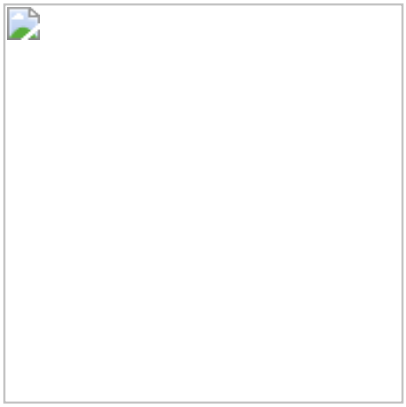
[https://www.dndbeyond.com/characters/153403920](D&D Beyond Character)

Downloadable PDFs>

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3

Character Advancement>

- Level 2: Automatically gain Cunning Action
- Level 3: Choose the Assassin subclass



Nog the Dwarf

Dwarf Cleric

Dustin Henderson's sturdy Cleric, Nog, has gotten his companions out of a bind more times than he can count. Nog is a devotee of Heironeous, a god of chivalry, justice, and war.

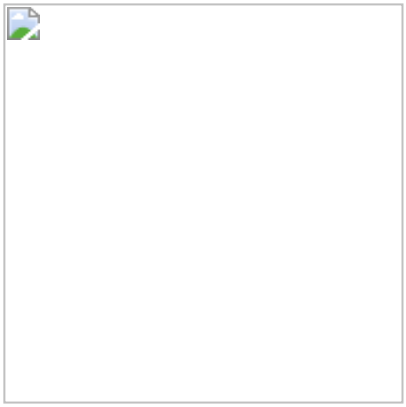
[https://www.dndbeyond.com/characters/153405931](D&D Beyond Character)

Downloadable PDFs>

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3

Character Advancement>

- Level 2: Automatically gain Channel Divinity
- Level 3: Choose the War Domain subclass



Tayr the Paladin

Halfling Paladin

When Mike Wheeler isn't behind the DM screen in his parents' basement, he dusts off his trusty Paladin Tayr. The heart of the party, Tayr unites his companions and leads the charge in their fight against evil.

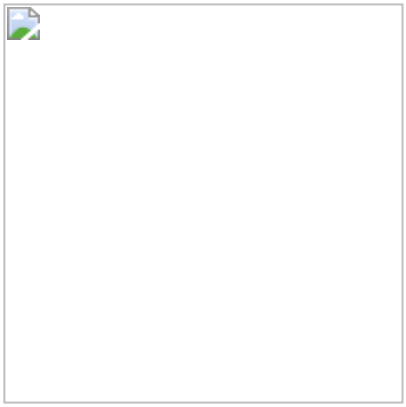
[https://www.dndbeyond.com/characters/153409110](D&D Beyond Character)

Downloadable PDFs>

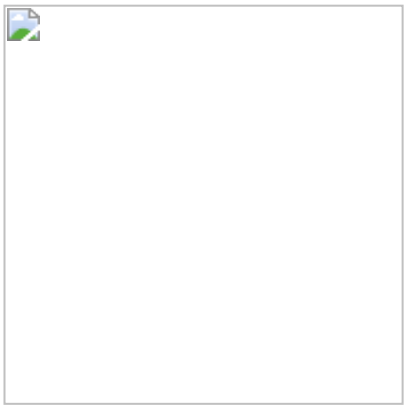
- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3

Character Advancement>

- Level 2: Automatically gain Divine Smite
- Level 3: Choose the Oath of Devotion subclass



Credits



- **Lead Designer:** Justice Ramin Arman
- **Designers:** Jeremy Crawford, Anthony Joyce-Rivera, Ron Lundeen, Taylor Navarro
- **Rules Developers:** Jeremy Crawford (lead), Makenzie De Armas
- **Editors:** Janica Carter (lead), Judy Bauer
- **Art Directors:** Kate Irwin (lead), Kara Kenna (lead), AJ Hanneld
- **Graphic Designers:** Trish Yochum (lead), Jino Choi, Shaun Doniger, Meagan Kenreck
- **Interior Illustrators:** Justine Mara Andersen, Justice Ramin Arman, Butcher Billy, Christopher Burdett, Conceptopolis & Sergio Jaramillo, DZO, Steve Ellis, Fraktal Limited, Trevor Girard, John Grello, Ralph Horsley, Justine Jones, Daria Khlebnikova, Indra Nugroho, Alejandro Pacheco, Pig Hands, Mark Riddick, Phil Stone, Paolo Vacala, Richard Whitters
- **Cover Illustrator:** Butcher Billy
- **Cartographers:** Stacey Allan & William Doyle
- **Concept Art Directors:** Kate Irwin (lead), Josh Herman, Kara Kenna
- **Concept Artist:** Ekaterina Burmak
- **Consultants:** Basheer Ghouse, Sameer Joseph, Pam Punzalan
- **Additional Consultation:** Christopher Perkins, F. Wesley Schneider
- **Producers:** Rob Hawkey (lead), Bill Benham, Siera Bruggeman, Vanessa Hoskins, Dan Tovar

Disclaimer: shouting into or entering the The Vale of Shadows may or may not attract the attention of dangerous entities from beyond your home plane of existence. Interacting with those entities may result in dangerous encounters or even adventure. Please consult with your Dungeon Master before entering. No Hellfire Club members were harmed in the making of this book.